

Theatre Australia

Can't Stop The Music—
Music Theatre Part Two

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Our Best New Writer

Nita Pannell—
WA's First Lady Of Theatre

QTC's Candida





SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY
PREMIERE SEASON 1980



TREASURY SOUTH GEORGE J. VAN
COSE OF PLAY W. FEB-MARCH
NOVEMBER NOVEMBER
TOGETHER W. FEB-MARCH
AND TAKING IT TO THE ROAD W. FEB-MARCH
GRAND DE BERGERAC W. FEB-MARCH
WIDOWS OF WINDSOR W. FEB-MARCH
THE PRECIOUS WOMAN W. FEB-MARCH



Theatre Australia

OCTOBER, 1990, VOLUME 5, No. 3

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John Bell as VOLPONE

Ben Jonson



Paul Bertram
Paul Chubb
Peter Collingwood
Bill Conn
Tyler Coppin
Linda Cropper
Tim Eliott
Colin Friel
Pat McDonald
John McTernan
Barry Otto

Directors Neil Armfield
John Bell

Designer Kim Carpenter
Lighting Nigel Levings

NIMROD

COMMENT

When Hoopla opened in Melbourne in 1977 one of its declared aims was to "focus on the production of new Australian plays" in their first year they presented 22 Australian plays, in one form or another. Now that aim has fallen by the wayside (there is only one Australian programme in the current season of six), but Hoopla has survived to become Melbourne's third non-commercial professional theatre.

So naturally, Sydney needs one too. Recently people have been complaining about the similarity between the S.T.C. and Nimrod. The collapse of the Toté forced Nimrod into a sale, of Sydney's leading company, which they had not originally looked for (but which they took on ungrudgingly). Now Richard Wherrett is running the S.T.C., John Bell is moving between the two companies to play the great classic roles of Cymbeline and Volpone, and each company has got itself a new Louis Nowera play, it is a scene rich in talent and achievement but a little poor in variety. If Graeme Blundell is right, and Sydneyers really work at and enjoy their theatre, then the time is right for a new company. And especially one with the style and policy which the King O'Malley Theatre company is promising.

The name is suspicious, for a start. *The Legend of King O'Malley* revived a great Australian tradition in theatrical style — and led, in Sydney at least, a brief upsurge of rough, burlesque, vaudevillean theatre — a theatre of stories, songs, jokes and rages, with a rough acting style based on energetic new skills. In the mid 70s all this activity died in the bars, and one of the aims of the new company is to revive it.

The company will be doing only Australian plays: the opening production is the Sydney premiere of *Errol Flynn's Great Big Adventure Book For Boys*, and the rest are new plays — including another Ellis tribute to the Wharfedale years (this time, we're told, a final farewell, like *Melba*) and *A Very Good Year*. They will be using talents new to the theatre: Patrick

Cook has designed *Errol Flynn*, Stephen Wallace will direct the second play, John Upson's *The War Horse*. And they will be doing plays with music and songs, which Dorothy Hewett wrote about in last month's *E.A.* Bob Ellis has said that 60% of successful shows in Australia have music, so with 2 out of 4 O'Malley only has 10% to make up to make a go of it.

Musicians can be a problem in the theatre, though, and it needs saying. O'Malley are using their own musicians so they're alright, but the dreaded 11.00 o'clock deadline, one minute after which you have to pay the average band another five hundred dollars, has led more than one artistic director off into the dressing room mumbling about parasites. This is the importance of the new skills, such as they respect in Carlton — actors must be able to accompany their own songs.

Dorothy Hewett wrote last month, "The play with music is different in kind to the musical, as Brecht discovered, for it enables both playwright and audience to keep one foot on the ground of realism and the other high kicking to the stars." With a song you can tell a new story, rage, move onto a new level, or into a new world, or link a new mix of material using the universal appeal of a good score. Good luck to the King O'Malley Theatre Company. As Oscar Wilde said "We're all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars."



John McCallum

Theatre Australia

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I N F O

TIMELESS LAND... The ABC previewed its major drama production for 1980, the series *The Timeless Land*, at the end of August to a very appreciative audience of press and literati. The preview was most appropriately held in the NSW State Library's Mitchell and Dickson Galleries where photos of some of our best actors in settler costume did not compare badly in authenticity with the magnificent early Australian portraits and landscapes of Sydney-side.

The series stars English actors Nicola Pegg (Upstart Downstart and Anne Karenina) and Michael Craig, last seen here for *The Fourth Wish* and *The Drunkenian* as well as playing *Prospero* for the *Old Tote*. With equal top billing are Ray Barrett and Angela Parnch McGregor as Governor

Bligh and a convict girl, Ellen. Fine performances are also given by Peter Collingwood as Governor Philip, Adam Garnatun as Ellen's son and Charles Yarrupunga as the aboriginal Breralong.

That *The Timeless Land* will be a success in Australia is unquestionable, but already the ABC have recouped production costs by selling all international rights to Paramount for the princely sum of \$1 million. How widely the American company will distribute it in the rest of the world remains to be seen.

There seemed to be general agreement among the assembled viewers at the preview that Peter Yeldham's adaptation of the Eleanor Dark novels had turned out to be the best drama work yet to emerge from the ABC.



Kim Carpenter

NEW DIRECTOR FOR NIMROD...

The Nimrod Board has decided that a third full-time play director is a necessary complement to Nimrod's artistic directorate. The scale of regular house productions plus the increased number of tours and commercial ventures planned for 1981 have made this decision essential.

They recently announced the appointment of Aubrey Melior as co-artistic director of Nimrod and the resignation of designer Kim Carpenter as an artistic director at the end of the year. Nimrod paved the way in appointing a designer as an artistic director and regret that now due to financial stringencies they cannot retain this practice.

In 1981, though Kim will become an associate director and will also design two productions during that period. This year he has designed *The House of the Dead Men*, *The Chorus* and *Volpone*; he has supervised Nimrod's design work, encouraged the contributions of new graphic artists, photographers and designers and recommended such projects as the school children's *Chorus* mural.

Aubrey Melior has been with NIDA for ten years as a actor and as a director. His most recent productions have been *Mother Courage* and *The Beale of Gospel Place* for Jane Saxon seasons.



Peter Collingwood as Governor Philip attempting to make peace with the aboriginals.

ACROBATS OF CHINA... The Nanking Acrobatic Troupe from the People's Republic of China has completed the Perth, Adelaide and Melbourne legs of its tour, is currently playing Sydney and will go on to Canberra and Brisbane later this month.

The Company is rated as one of the top three troupes in China, a country with a

population of over 1,000 million, and understandably acrobatics is the most popular entertainment in China today.

The 55 member Nanking company includes diving, high balancing acts, juggling, comedy, magic, vaulting stunts, gymnastics, lion dances, truck cycling, contortions and musicians as well as the amazing acrobats. Trained from early childhood the acrobatic troupe members form part of

the ancient Chinese tradition that began and flourished as long ago as the second century BC.

The Nanking Acrobatic Troupe was founded in 1957 and as well as that tradition has drawn on the experience of acrobatic arts of other countries. Over the past twenty years they have been to more than a dozen countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America and the USA.



The Nanking Acrobatic Troupe

AUSTRALIAN SEASON IN ADELAIDE...

The State Theatre Company of SA has announced its first season for 1981, and the Artistic Directors Kevin Palmer and Nick Enright have shown an increasing bias towards Australian works.

They start mid-February with Kerin's classic *A Word Good* (directed by Enright) and while the company is on tour in London with Hewitt's *Man From Maratona* they will host a guest production at the Playhouse.

Another new musical, especially commended will follow, the book is to be written by David Allen, music by Glen Hennrich (music by Barry Pless and lyrics by Nick Enright). Annette Taylor will direct and with such a combination of talent an exciting new work seems the inevitable outcome.

Kevin Palmer will direct Shaw's *Pigmal-*

ion with Donna Olsen as Henry Higgins as the fourth production and the Mapple Theatre in Education team will perform a commissioned children's play by Dorothy Hewitt, provisionally called *The Golden Fagot*. The final Playhouse production will be a commissioned adaptation by Leon Numa of Wagstaff's *Lulu*, to be directed by Jim Sharman.

Contrasting the company's new policy of staging plays in smaller venues, Kevin Palmer will also direct David Allen's *Opus Down at the Bottom of the World* and *Fastwell in Brisbane Ladies* by Doreen Clarke at Theatre 62.

Despite grumblings from certain quarters in Adelaide the STC is to be much congratulated for its far-sightedness and daring: it is the first state theatre company to put major emphasis on Australian plays, they are extending some of the best writers



Nick Enright

by their commissions and they are using top talent from SA and elsewhere. We will all gain from it and let's hope it sets a trend further afield than Adelaide.

I N F O

TN DECISIONS... after failing to renew John Milson's contract as Artistic Director earlier this year, the future plans of Brisbane's second company, TN, former Twelfth Night, have been awaited with interest.

Now it has been revealed that a "special relationship" is being established between the theatre company and the Theatre co-ops at Kelvin Grove CAE, which is to continue a trial period of one year before review. In this unusual arrangement the two organisations will share facilities (including some office space), personnel and equipment. Don Batchelor, who is Acting President of TN and head of the KCAE Theatre Co-ops, said "A special relationship between a training organisation and a local young professional theatre company is of major significance in developing a theatre which grows out of the local community and relates all its developments to that community."

The new Resident Director of TN will be Bryan Nason who has worked for many Queensland theatre companies and run his own Ginn and Toomey Troupe. Mr Batchelor will act as co-ordinator of the special relationship and supervise broad policy matters in close concert with Adamant and/or Sue Tindon and Mr Nason.



Max Phipps

ON FALSTAFF... The Sydney Theatre Company's current production is *The Merry Wives of Windsor* directed by Mick Rodger and with Max Phipps as Falstaff. It's a pity that Rodger has hesitated to direct for years, because "in smacks of an author letting his hair down — a mixture of low and high comedy, and farce, which provides a diverting send-up of aspirationalism and egotism. Forget about the reverence due to 'the bard!' Here the wiles of the court and the patterns of history are replaced by the knockabout humour of a small, bourgeois country town — a rarity in Shakespeare. This is not the Falstaff of the histories. This one is a desperate courtier on the brink of failure — hedonistic failure."

Rumour has it that Shakespeare wrote the play in a fortnight at the express request of the Queen who wanted to see the fat knight in love, but Max Phipps thinks otherwise.

"Falstaff is not in love! He wouldn't be Falstaff if he was. He's desperate for cash and fornicating with the Merry Wives in a plausible way of getting (cash, I mean!) Our Falstaff is not a jolly, operatic Father Christmas, but a slyly impudent, grotesquely obese crook who farts his way through a labyrinth of preposterous plots doomed to disaster. He's Billy Bunter who never outgrew his self-delusions, or a caricature from Dickens. A fat, desperate Mr Mizzner."

MICK RODGER (director) and Max Phipps (Falstaff) comment on *The Sydney*

Theatre Company's forthcoming production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

MICK: "I've wanted to direct the play for years. It smacks of an author letting his hair down — a mixture of low and high comedy and farce, which provides a diverting send-up of aspirationalism and egotism. Forget about the reverence due to 'the bard!' Here the wiles of the court and the patterns of history are replaced by the knockabout humour of a small, bourgeois country town — a rarity in Shakespeare. This is not the Falstaff of the histories. This one is a desperate courtier on the brink of failure — hedonistic failure. Rumour has it that Shakespeare wrote the play in a fortnight at the express request of the Queen who wanted to see the fat knight in love."

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Don Batchelor



Clara Westwood

WOMEN DIRECTORS' WORKSHOP...

There is a distinct lack of female theatre directors in the country and Norrad feel this is a loss to the theatre scene and are setting out to remedy the situation. One of the reasons seems to be that women believe they lack the necessary background and confidence to move into the field, so Norrad is holding a 'directors' workshop' specifically for women.

Up to eight women will be selected from people who have worked consistently for the past five years or so in professional theatre — be it directing, acting, administration, choreography, stage management or whatever — and who are committed to directing as a vocation.

The workshop will be five weeks long, from November 18, and will be run by comedian Bruce Bennett, Pam Brighton, (last here to direct *Songs From Suburban Aids*). The first part will examine the functions and operations of the director's role and the second will concentrate on working with actors. And Norrad does not plan to abandon the directors with their new found skills, but will promote them to major theatres, which have agreed in principle to use the women in a directing capacity next year.

This valuable workshop was initiated by Norrad's Community Officer, Clara Westwood.

VICTOR BORGE... In 1950 Victor Borge was named "The funniest man in music", in 1953 he created the annual history by developing a one-man show, and in 1958 he was nominated "Comedian of the Year".

Since then he has performed for kings, queens and presidents. He has been knighted by the Kings of Norway, Sweden and Denmark and has three times been honoured by the US Congress. In recent years Mr Borge has conducted scores of symphony

orchestras in America and Europe, including the London Philharmonic, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, Philadelphia Orchestra, National Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra and St Louis Symphony.

Now he is just starting an Australian national tour lasting four weeks. The programme is called *Concerts on Mass* and his special guest for the engagement will be soprano Marilyn Malvey.



Victor Borge

O'MALLEY STRIKES AGAIN... Bob Ellis, Lex Marinos and Michael Lynch are the directors of the newly formed King O'Malley Theatre Company which will operate out of the Ellis owned Stables Theatre in Norrad Street, Sydney.

They are currently presenting Rob George's *Lord Phaul's Great Big Adventure Book For Boys* and before the end of the year will produce three more plays.

The War Horse by John Upson, to be directed by Stephen Wallace, *The Siege of Fort Mifflin* by Dennis Whitham, and as the final show Bob Ellis' own farewell to the Whithams called *A Very Good Fear*.

Last night shows are also on the cards with possibilities at this stage being *Conversations with Bob* by James Ruckman and a new play by Errol Bray about young people on the dial in King's Cross.

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ADELAIDE	FESTIVAL THEATRE	OCT 24
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WHISPERS RUMOURS & FACTS



by Norman Kravitt

The Ensemble Theatre will again stage a Festival of Australian Playwrights, its third, as part of the 1981 Festival of Sydney. As the Stables Theatre will not be available this year, the season will open at the St. James Playhouse on December 28 and end simultaneously with the Sydney Festival on Australia Day, January 26.

Play selection was almost complete at the time of writing, although contracts had not then been finalised. One work chosen is *When In Rome*, a first play by Ensemble Company member Sandra Bates.

Also listed is *Glad Days*, by Patricia Johnson. Another work will probably have been decided upon by the time you read this.

I am pleased to pass on a prediction by *Old Moore* in his upcoming almanack: "Children, the theatre and the arts will be the creative focus for 1981."

Full marks to the Theatre Royal and its excellent stage crew for the mounting and handling of the intricate staging of Neil Simon's *Three Men in a Crutch*, with its sliding screens and projections, flower drops and uteruses and revolving stage. This is the first time the Royal's equipment and facilities have been fully extended since it opened in 1976. Both theatre and crew came through literally with flying colours. Only the sound system was a bit awry on opening night and that would have been soon adjusted. Manager Pat Boggs told me all hands worked day and night for a week setting up the show. Wages and overtime alone totalled up to \$7,000. Production co-ordinator Sue Nattrass was so delighted with the result she presented a bottle of Scotch to every member of the crew.

I was the most pleased about the Royal's success having just previously

read that the owners of London's Shaftesbury Theatre spent \$200,000 to sell the stage "to cope with the show's technical complexities". Incidentally, the \$200,000 London production starring Tom Conti and Gemma Craven (remember her in TV's delightful *Pennies From Heaven*?) in the *John Waters* and *Jacki Weaver* roles, opened on September 18, nearly four weeks after Sydney.

What a magnificent record of Australian theatre achievement is contained in *The Performing Arts Year Book of 1979*, the fourth such published by David and Chin Yee Williams' Showcase Publications Pty Ltd. No wonder that at the well-attended launching at the Opera House Reception Hall, the volume's more than 500 pages of text and pictures and its 44-page index, listing by my count some 9000 names of plays and players in theatre, film, television and concert, was described by guest of honor John Bell as an epitome of national pride.

Having just presented half a lifetime's collection of programs and theatre memorabilia to the Australian National Library in Canberra, this year's book provides for me an invaluable replacement source of reference. There's a great bonus offer for anyone else wanting to start such a shelf. If you buy Vol 4 at \$25, you can have the three previous volumes at \$10 each.

John Bell elaborated on his mention of national pride by telling of a Scottish production which so worried this emotion in the audience that one man cried out "And what's your Willy Shakespeare the need?"

Without doubt, one of the year's best performances is now being given in Sydney by Brian Young in the Ensemble Theatre's production of Ronald Kibben's *Cold Comforts*, in which he is most ably partnered by Len Kiserbaum. But did you know that originally it had been hoped to cast Warren Mitchell and Heidi Stoppa respectively in this two-hander? It was Mitchell's outstanding and extended U.K. success in *Drish of a Salamander* that made this impossible and gave Brian Young the opportunity he has so brilliantly grasped.

Apart from its quality as a play, I suspect a measure of alternative in

Hayes Gordon's choice of *Cold Comforts*. It must steal some of the thunder of the long-delayed *Whose Life Is It, Anyway?* Both plays are about courage in meeting death and the latter was such an obvious Ensemble-type play that efforts to acquire it quickly followed the London premiere. The Australian rights, however, had been secured by Derek Glynn (London) Pty Ltd. Latest word is that *Whose Life* will be staged here next year by the Elizabethan Theatre Trust, possibly in association with Paul Elliott.

Vanity reported recently that the Broadway production of *Whose Life* lost \$142,000 of its \$450,000 investment. This was after allowing for the \$194,000 it cost to rewrite and rehearse the show when Mary Tyler Moore replaced Tom Conti in the lead role. However, the US version is expected to recoup all or most of the loss from a now-running national tour.

Another long-delayed production is *Filippo*, the award-winning Keith Waterhouse and Mills Hall 1977 adaptation of the comedy *Filippo Maritano*, written by Italian playwright-actor-director Eduardo de Filippo in 1946. This was not the first adaptation G. Hugh Herbert did as earlier one which had a three-performance season in New York in 1956 under the title *The Best House in Naples*. *Filippo* is also an Elizabethan Theatre Trust prospect for 1981.

An Australia-wide tour is in the planning stage for the original Ensemble cast in George Hutchinson's *No Reason For Dreamers* on their return from overseas. The itinerary may include Darwin.

Female impersonator Chris Shaw is on tour in Spain with *The Godmother*, the show in which he was last in Sydney, at the Speakeasy.

One of my pet snobish opinions is that theatre is a two-way traffic, that an audience gets from a show in proportion to what it contributes. I welcome endorsement from no less than Sir Prior Hall, who said in a recent article in the London Daily Telegraph: "It is the audience which complicity or ethically a play, makes a power or richer, flatter or lazier."

I like it. An English dramatic company which calls itself Mrs Worthington's Daughters.

STATE THEATRE COMPANY

BENT

Martin
Sherman



PLAYHOUSE
October 10-25

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Lighting Designer: Mark Loring
Production designed by the R. Lee of Quirk

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Rene, Janet, John, Laura, Peter, Richard, Robert, Thomas

SPOTLIGHT

by Donna Sadka

Jenny McNae swears she never wanted to be an actress. She had seen too much of what her elder sister ("an actress and a good one") had to cope with to have any illusions about the glamour of the footlights.

It was the technical side of theatre which interested her and when she left school she went into her local playhouse in Richmond, Surrey, as a student A.S.M. "It's a week, do everything you're asked to do, keep your eyes and ears open, and you'll learn a lot."

"I did too," recalls Ms McNae, "but of course the inevitable happened, the fall fairy tale bit. Four years later when I was stage managing a big Xmas musical at Bristol and the leading lady got tonsillitis I had to step in for the night, there was literally no one else. Well, all that praise and applause. I was hooked."

If the truth be told she never really wanted to come to Australia either. She was working in London and doing very nicely—thankyou when, ten years later, Frank Baden-Powell came to the U.K. looking for people for his then burgeoning Australian Old Time Musical Hall shows. She had been involved in the rebirth of OTMH in English clubs and pubs so in 1970 she agreed to do a six month season for him in Perth. She stayed a year before moving off into straight theatre again and has made Perth her home ever since.

She has worked as a leading actress in the Perth Playhouse, the Hale in the West, and Baden Powell Enterprises and done a lot of television, from *Chopper Squad* to *Run From the Morning*.

Although there is not much television made in W.A., she has narrated three of the half dozen programmes of the nationally distributed *For the*

Answers and regularly writes and presents *Let's Joke* in an ABC radio, "So my voice at least is probably quite well known to Aussies six years old!"

She enjoys working with children and at the time of writing she is immersed in an intensive one week study course in remedial drama at the Claremont Teachers College to help her with her work as a practitioner specialised in the performing arts studies workshops she gives at John Curtin High School.

"Drama is such an emotive thing with kids where dangerous things can come to the surface, and it's important to know how to handle them."

Although it would never, she said, wear her away from theatre completely, it clearly appeals to the creative artist in her. "Working with children is very freeing. Their minds aren't bound about like ours... they can take off with the most wonderful fantasies from the basic topics you've started with. It's most inspiring."

It frustrates her a little that there are not more opportunities in Australia for her to direct. "In England there are a lot of highly regarded women directors and I did quite a lot and never found any resentment or problems. Here there are less openings (notice-

ably all the resident directors of the major companies are men) and she seems to feel that it is almost a male-female thing that influences the status quo.

On the one or two occasions when she has had a chance to flex her doctoral muscles she has demonstrated her ability, most recently and notably in a cheerfully vigorous sponsored (as in wild) *Taming of The Shrew* for the Playhouse, which bore the stamp of her experience in musicals and music hall. It had very good notices, but such jobs come her way rarely and she regrets a

This month (September) she goes to Brisbane to play the lead in *Camelia* for the Queensland Theatre Company under guest director John Wilson, a contract she looks forward to. "It's a nice, simple piece (of *Shaw*), non verbose, sort of an early *Ten and Twelve*. Working with John will be a pleasure too. We've done a variety of productions together in Perth, *Wages*, *Dais*, *Current*, *Liza*, *Dais* in the *Tree*, *Small Change*, and have a good professional rapport."

It is hard to pin down a definitive McNae style. A quiet and unobtrusive personality offstage, onstage she is as much at home belting out a song as a lamenting *Adelaide* in *Guns and Dolls*, as she is adorning her son as a maternally regal Queen *Gertrude* in *Hamlet*, *Classics*, from the performance point of view, are just another show.

It is perhaps indicative that of her highly thought of portrayal of *Olga* in Stephen Barry's production of *The Three Sisters* this year she remarks, "Olga is really the least notable, least feminine of the women in the play, yet the performance seemed to work. I empathised with her very strongly. I really don't approach these productions with a this-is-a-classic sort of attitude. I do every part as it comes as a character, and a play, to find out about."



JENNY MCNAE

NITA PANNELL



by Donna Sadka

Listening to West Australian actress Nita Pannell reminisce about her career one might think that the number of fortuitous encounters with people important to her work was something to do with the hand of fate. But it takes more than coincidence and good fortune to achieve the outstanding reputation which this veteran performer enjoys.

In a lifetime of theatre she has played fifty different leads in a wide field of drama and has created roles in premieres of four important Australian plays. She has had parts especially written for her by several writers, including Patrick White and Dame Mary Dumas; and although resident in Perth she has worked for internationally famed directors Sir Bernard Miles, Michael Langham, and Sir Tyrone Guthrie as well as top Australian theatre men such as George

Ogilby, Robert Dreyer, and John Sumner. And Colin Ballantine is Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and London.

Now in her seventies her passionate zest for theatre is undiminished and she continues to work, when occasions offer — although she remarks rather wistfully that nowadays it doesn't offer as frequently as she would wish — and she years for someone to stage revivals of plays like *The Roach* or *June and the Porcelain* which have good, strong character parts ideally suited, she points out, to an actress of her years.

As a young teacher in the late twenties she helped produce school performances of lullabies, singing, and "bits of plays" but she did not come to grips with theatre until, as a doctor's wife in the small country town of Goosalling, she started a repertory group to cheer people up during the depression.

"We began with a *Come!*" she recalls. "I got hold of a French's Acting Edition (I wondered what X.L. meant!) and worked it all out from there. After that the Perth Rep gave me some songs, some helpful hints and a book on makeup."

Back in Perth some years later, her husband in his own practice, she took some classes with Ida Beeby at Patch and from then on, as far as her was, in those days Perth theatre was all amateur but she was kept busy with both performances and productions for the Patch, the Repertory Club, the early Perth Festival, the Gilbey and Sullivan Society and The Company Of Four, of which she was a part founder. It was appropriate to someone who had already contributed so much that in 1936 she was invited to produce the play *Twelve of the Angeli* for the opening of the Perth Playhouse theatre — the first fully professional theatre in Australia.

But one of the most significant periods of her acting life began in 1957 when Robin Lovejoy and Hugh Hunt, in Perth for the Festival, dropped in on her production of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* in which she was also playing Madame Jourdan. She was good and as a committed theatreman always prepared to recognise her limitations, she knew it. "By then I was plump and I looked right and I could do it on my ear."

Hunt wanted her to come to Sydney to do the Nurse in his Trust production of *Rotundo and Jailer* and although that was subsequently cancelled she was remembered when, in 1958, Lovejoy came to Perth to direct the Trust's premiere of Richard Beynon's prize-winning play *The Stepping Stone*.

She says now that there was initially some opposition to her casting and the Playhouse worried that audiences might be held. But opposition over or otherwise, spurs her on and deliberately putting an additional stone in weight and learning the authentic accent from her amused Italian cleaning lady, she created a truly memorable Momma Bianchi. So great was the production's popularity that the Trust toured it for nine months through Eastern States capitals and 120 country towns between South Australia, NSW, Queensland, and Tasmania. It was the first really big Australian success since *The Doll*.

Over an after-the-show coffee during that tour one of the cast remarked idly that he felt "the great Australian play" would eventually be written by Patrick White. "To my everlasting shame I asked 'Who's he?', Mrs Parnell chuckles. At the next stop she bought a copy of *Poet* and promptly wrote the author a fan letter which she never posted.

In 1958 she was invited to play the blinded woman in *Moon On A Swathlow Shore* at the first Adelaide festival — this time a West Indian accent and a young newcomer called Kimball as the cabaret singer.

It was not until 1961 that she actually met Patrick White after a performance in the Sydney premiere of *The One Day of The Year* which went on to make Australian theatre history by doing a London tour. He spoke to her about a possible production of *The Here Festival* and

the character Mrs Lamy, but in the event the London season intervened.

In England a London agent offered her services and after the Australian play closed she went into Sir Bernard Miles production of *The Red Ship at the Marston*. They wanted someone who could do a Russian accent.

White remembered her however, and shortly after her return to Perth she undertook the part of Miss Docker for him in John Sumner's premiere production of *The Cherry Stone* in Melbourne. "It was brilliantly written," she says, "so much so that getting into the skin of that unsympathetic woman each night had a devastating effect on me. I suppose you can get above a part and make the character have those feelings with technique alone, but I must experience them. When I do a role I must feel what that woman's feeling. Poor Mrs Docker inspired such loathing I could feel the hair coming back from the audience and it got me down."

The strain was great but the new White part she undertook was the perfect antidote — the old poor woman in *Night on Bald Mountain* and she believes it was the best thing she has done.

In fact Mrs Quodling echoed down the years to her much later when in 1978 she undertook the role of Estragon in Mike Morris's all female production of *Waiting For Godot* in Perth. The concept of the production was a departure from her usual traditional approach but she was anxious to work with the innovative and exciting young Morris and Quodling and Estragon had much in common. Her performance in that splendid production in an androgynous little voice in a battered felt hat, with Joan Sydney and clownish Vlad, was very fine.

It was Patrick White who pre-eminently sowed the seed that eventually was to germinate into the other important area of her career and she says she is forever indebted to him. "During rehearsals of *Bald Mountain* he called out from the stalls, 'Nina, you should try dramatic work.'" In this testing field in recent years she has demonstrated her considerable range and made the one woman play her forte.

Her friend, writer Mary Dunack,

recalls a place — not yet given a remarkable Mother Superior in the school in Broome and it was while searching at the archives for further material that her greatest one woman success, pioneer woman Ellen Shaw, was discovered.

Much excitement, burnt out in several hours later, Mrs Parnell recounts, it was mapped out. They worked on it together for some months and she tried out a scene or two for Sir Tyrone Guthrie in Perth to do a programme at the Geelong. From him she learnt about the value of economy in writing dramatic scripts. "You see my dear," he told her, "you can infer that, you must leave it to the actress. It can be shown without describing it in words."

"I learnt a lot," she says, "and I will have the handwriting on my original script."

So as *River Sage*, as it was finally called, played the Perth Festival to full houses in 1972, did several repeat seasons, and went on to a highly successful Eastern States tour.

For International Woman's Year she presented a programme of dramatized portraits of three other pioneer women, Mary Dunack's Mother Bridget, Caroline Chisholm (which she wrote herself), and Catherine Gavin from the story by Rita Enoson.

In 1977 she was awarded the OBE. Since then she has appeared in the occasional film and assumes her appetite for work with programmes for schools, societies and festivals. Many of these are from scripts she researched and wrote herself, but she is now doing the monodrama *Raymond Isenhardt* by Jason Lindsay, which English director Marianne MacNaghten asked her to perform when she heard about Mrs Parnell in the UK. MacNaghten came to Perth to direct it for the Playhouse theatre in August.

Nina Parnell has seen huge changes in Australian theatre since those days at Greenall's. "I'm beginning to wonder if these days they've not gone a bit overboard with the decor and the dressing," she reflects. "I feel the emphasis should be more on the action: the performance. Michael Langham would say 'If you're doing your job properly Nina, no one's going to look at that cupboard'."

La Boite's Early Childhood Drama Project

By Richard Fotheringham

The ECDP "discovery" team in the week I join them is out at Sandgate, an old Brisbane seaside suburb with a declining birthrate and a fairly stable population. The Pre-School Centre is a bit run down, a bit under-equipped, but not swamped by kids. On Monday the four actor-teacher spend the day playing with both morning and afternoon groups, getting to know names and personalities, developing a working relationship with teacher and kids, finding out their interests. The focus for the team is the teacher-student relationship — "we started 'discovery' programmes when we realised that teachers were interested in developing things." In some places the teacher is an active participant, an actor in the show they'll devise over three days.

Problem One at Sandgate is that the teacher is old and conservative, appreciative but withdrawn — certainly unlikely to sign on with Roger, Hutch, and the Captain for a voyage of adventure. So on Tuesday they're back in the old house beside La Boite which serves as base, frustrated in one of their principal aims. They've noticed that there are few organised activities at the centre: "It's more like day care", so they're aiming for a strong imaginative programme with maximum participation from the kids. They decide to use as a structure an old primary school show *Voyage to the New Land* based on Captain Cook. It offers a sea voyage with the kids as crew, and ready made props and costumes. (Though they've been known to make them in a day too.)

I'd seen *Voyage* before, so when I join them back at Sandgate on the Wednesday I'm curious to see to what extent they can change it to suit new circumstances and different educational objectives. They begin by playing with the kids again, then ease into the show with deliberate honesty — "kids aren't over told what structures

they're being put in" — explaining the characters, the set, and disappearing one by one to re-emerge as the people in the story. They're instantly accepted as Roger, Hutch, the Tavern Keeper, and the Captain, and in ten minutes they've signed on a crew for a voyage in search of buried treasure on Skull Island.

After another twenty minutes the imaginations of the kids have taken over. A team member has hidden a box of treasure in the sandpit, but that's become quicksand, and they don't need it anyway because the kids have decided where the treasure is, dug up an imaginary box of pieces of eight, and are carrying it back to the ship. And then the four-year-old on lookout sights a storm which won't be in the script either, but there's a box of percussion instruments handy for just such an eventuality. For an hour and a half the actors ride this wave of intensely concentrating young minds, never letting things get over-excited, knowing just when to push on to the next element of the plot. And when finally the story starts to fragment, they quietly close it down, one team member holding things together while the others exit, and return calmly as themselves.

It's been an exhilarating, unique morning and having lunch on the lawn afterwards they talk about the most exciting moments and those that could be improved. Realise that they've been in role, thought as teachers and creators, and also observed what each child was doing. I'm left with the impression of a superb ensemble, totally dedicated to well thought through philosophies of education and pleasure.

The "senior" team, when I catch up with them the next day, is out at Inala, a rougher, housing commission estate for industrial workers. Most first contacts with schools are made through this team, it's a package deal closer to community expectations of

what theatre is. A class is poured in to the activities room where art and actors await them, and then pointed out again to be replaced by another class. The actors fight to subvert this structure, again explaining who they are, how they made the set. They perform a new version of last year's most popular show, *Og*. I'm not so sure about this one, it tries to combine an involvement experience of digging for gold with a social message about how bushrangers got to be that way. This performance is very aware, with real gold from rocks instead of fantasy treasure chests, and the plight of Bushranger Bill seems a bit of an afterthought. But it's only the second day out after rehearsals, and I'm one of many laymen whose opinions they're politely considering.

For what it's worth, John O'Toole (whose recent book on drama in education surveyed some of the best English TIE teams) considered the ECDP one of the best teams he'd ever seen at work. They're bursting with new ideas, and crippled by being a professional company working under the auspices of an amateur theatre (La Boite). This situation denies them guaranteed annual funding, and puts incredible financial pressure on them. "Where else," asks one, "is a day spent talking to teachers criticised because it's not revenue producing activity?" They desperately need a youth director to provide a critical and creative sounding board for their work; this has been vetoed yet again by the La Boite board who don't want to see the theatre get further into subsidy.

But the ECDP is a company of national significance in its field. There are far too many TIE teams in Australia made up of would-be actors peddling second-rate poetry programmes, old British scripts, and older educational theories. I wonder if the La Boite board realise just how important the Early Childhood Drama Project is.

CAN'T STOP THE MUSIC - PART TWO

THE BEST LITTLE WHOREHOUSE IN TEXAS

BY CHRISTINE HOGAN

The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas posed a problem right from the start for its promoters, Cooke Hayden Price and Clifford Hecking.

It was the name of this musical, score by Carol Hall and libretto by Larry L. King and Peter Masterson, which provided the first of the problems.

Some radio stations blipped *Whorehouse* out of advertisements for the show at Her Majesty's. Some publications refused advertising copy at first.

A rider was soon added: "But there ain't nothing going on."

So the musical, which opens with the history of The Chicken Ranch while in the background one of the girls carries on a transaction with one of the customers, was branded.

Much of the bad language has been removed, along with much of the bawdiest music.

What remains is this Australian production is a classic good versus evil equation, the real life story of how the "buddies" masquerading as the forces of good, attempted and succeeded in closing down a famous Texas brothel in 1973.

The formula seems inevitably successful.

Take one of Australia's favourite actresses in the form of Lorraine Bayly, who despite a formidable

background in the theatre is best known as Grace Sullivan, matriarch (now deceased) of the country's favourite television family.

Add Alfred Sinden, whose voice must be one of the most heard in Australian advertisements, the urbane and competent chief of surgery at the Albert Hospital in another 9 Network serial, *The Young Doctors*.

Frankie J. Holden, Jack Connell, Peter Whitford, Doug Sgroope and Jon Selway provide a solid and talented supporting ensemble, as the songs and Tommy Tang's choreography meld into what is in America that most desirable of things, a long running musical.

(A keen observer of the American theatre was moved to remark that in the US, the musical did well in three places: Broadway, and two centres in Texas. For the touring company, Alexis Smith's name was above the title, and she was promoted heavily. Apparently some parts of America had the same problems with the name and the subject.)

This "cheerful, cheering and dolled" musical is set in the bordello in 1973.

There, the transactions had been going on since the 1890s. The brothel was almost a State institution, run properly.

During the depression, the whorehouse was renamed The Chicken Ranch, in honour of the main item of exchange.

Patrons too poor to pay the price of dalliance with the ladies of the house brought along chickens and handed them over before the serious business of the house was allowed to proceed.

Miss Walle Jean was the madam then; in the musical she has been replaced by Miss Mona (Lorraine Bayly).

Miss Mona was one of the inmates of The Chicken Ranch, to whom Walle Jean bequeathed her property.

Miss Mona ran her little part of the world with an iron hand: among her rules were no narcotics, no drinking during business hours, no tattoos, good table manners, no cliques... and "bitch" was not meant to be uttered in."

The action of *The Best Little Whorehouse* begins when two new girls, Sky and Amber (Jana Robbins and Olga Tamara, last seen going down with the wreck of 10 Network's *Armadillo*) arrive to take up residence.

The excitement for the new few days centres around a football match between the Texas Aggies and Texas U.

The winning scenario from the game are to be treated to a night out by their Alumni Association - a night out at the Chicken Ranch.

The house is relatively quiet, "bitchin' much to see" according to the song A L Y O M Bay Point Country Place, but suddenly it becomes the centre of controversy.

The girls who work for Miss Moss don't go to jail, don't pay bail (they even have a group ride at Blue Cross).

Once upon a time, Miss Moss loved Sheriff Ed Earl Jones. The warmth of that relationship lingers on between them still and Miss Moss carries on her business without regard of the law — except for one.

Sheriff Ed (Alfred Sander) runs his town like a martinet: he brooks no interference. Life goes on quietly, monitored by him from the dimly-lit doorway where the datterly Doomy Mae dispenses the coffee.

Doomy Mae (Judith Cornwell) often cast-logging looks down the dirt road to the Chicken Ranch: it seems a more appealing way of life than the one she has.

But trouble is brewing at Melvin P. Thorpe, a crusading television personality, determined to close down the Chicken Ranch.

Melvin (Doug Sgroop) runs Watchdog, a program which keeps an eye on what is going on in Texas. It is hooked up by his girl singers, The Doggies.

He has just dealt successfully with the makers of a peanut bar who neglected to include the appropriate amount of peanuts into the bars.

Now, Melvin is after bigger game: Miss Moss's house of ill-repute in Gilbert.

"Well, here it goes and God forgive," Melvin tells his viewers.

"Texas has a whorehouse in it." He intones that with obvious pleasure of revelation: the Doggies chorus "Lord have mercy on our souls."

Melvin P. Thorpe involves them next by an end to all this loveless copulation, countermanded by the pseudo-righteous sheriff, Ed Earl Dodd.

The sheriff is alarmed: Miss Moss advises a show of breaking up moonshine whiskey to impress the voters.

The little town of Gilbert firmly endures over the name of Miss Moss's Boarding House (for as such it is properly named. On it she pays double taxes.)

The pressure is really on when a television crew comes to town looking for the Sheriff and more of interest to viewers already flayed by the whorehouse scandal.

Sheriff Ed strides downtown to confront his antagonists, where he becomes so enraged he clears the street with a pistol shot.

This of course does not stop Melvin's campaign. The Governor (Peter Whitford) and a senator (Jon Sadley) are involved as the drama plays itself out.

There is more singing, dancing and conflict before the final curtain is rung down on the story of the Chicken Ranch.

The happy-ever-after resolution is not altogether possible. Real life intervenes, but it does come close.

The over-all effect of the musical is one of humor and good songs. It is this, rather than the memory of the first, unadorned sexual encounter, that most members of the audience will take away with them.

The arrival of *The Best Little Whorehouse* on to Australian stages is the second major musical production to open in Sydney in a month.

August saw the triumphant opening of Neil Simon's *There's a Party* Our Song, with lyrics and music by Carole Bayer Sager and Marvin Hamlisch.

This is an old-fashioned, boy meets girl musical with wit and style, a musical one could take grandma to see and not be one who uncays that the old girl would be offended.

Basically a two bander starring John Waters and Jacki Weaver, *There's a Party* Our Song has a very clever book and some memorable songs.

Simon is now working on the written adaptation of the musical with Hamlisch.

The opening of two new musicals in Sydney combined with the opening in August of the Melbourne season of Hal Prince's production of *Evita* (by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice) and Jeanine Lewis's casting in Hecph's *Paul* indicates a continuation of the revival of interest in the musical theatre world wide.

Richard Wherrett plans a production of *Chicago* for the Sydney Theatre Company next year. *Evita* is due on Sydney stages early in the New Year, though if its run in Melbourne continues to be as successful as its opening month, that could be later.

All forms of musical theatre are enjoying the boom the Australian Opera is doing very well, and the State

opera companies report good sales. Cabaret flourishes.

In New York this summer, the focus of attention was on a production of *M. M. S. Angore* by Joseph Papp. In the leads he had cast Linda Ronstadt, known more for her Ruddy Holly revivals than her Gilbert and Sullivan, and Rex Smith, a toothsome popper.

The boom in new musical theatre has had a welcome side-effect: old musicals are being revived.

(This can sometimes have a deleterious effect. *Star* — a brilliant play by Martin Sherman — which starred Richard Gere initially on Broadway — was taken off in the West End. It was a difficult play, which dealt with the plight of homosexuals under Hitler in replacement — a revival of *On Your Mark*.)

In New York this summer, there has been a revival crop untrampled in previous summers.

At the Equity Library Theatre, there is a revival of Irving Berlin's 1946 musical, *Annie Get Your Gun* Over at the Palace, *Oliver!* delighted audiences.

Dick Van Dyke starred in *The Mirror*. Alan the 1940 revival of Meredith Willson's classic about the gingers on in River City.

The 23-year-old musical *West Side Story* one of Sondheim's early gems, was danced and choreographed for this revival season by its original director, Jerome Robbins.

Only two years old, *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, by Vincent Carroll, from the Book of Matthew, also enjoyed a summer revival.

Still in New York, there are shows like *A Chorus Line*, *Annie, Annie* (Mickelthorn) (a show based on the performing career of Fats Waller) *Dames*, Bob Fosse's dance extravaganza, *The Glee Club*, *My Darling Clementine*, *On the Beach*, *Peter Pan* (23 years-old now) *Sugar Babies*, the vaudeville entertainment of Mickey Rooney and Anne Miller in *Swingin' Todd*.

It is this last musical which Hal Prince is anxious to get on stage in Australia.

Probably the apogee of Stephen Sondheim's craft, *Swingin' Todd* starred the delicious Angela Lansbury as the pe-making doll and Lon Chaney as her supplier.

It opened in London with Sheila



Performing *The Phantom*, David Jones (left) and the show's star, Michael Pennington (right)

Hancock, but closed later in New York.

Whispers in theatrical circles said the budget was simply too high and the show had difficulty making up its original costs.

A great deal of those costs were devoured by knocking the prosecution out of the Uris Theatre, and building a set which dominated the action and underscored Sondheim's 25 songs

perfectly.

This musical was a perfect melting of theatre and music for heightened dramatic effect. It has already been taken into the repertoire of one opera company and the Canadian Opera Company in contemplating its possibilities.

Just how such an expensive and spectacular musical could be mounted here is hard to imagine. But Hal Prince

has doubtless covered many of the costs in his mind and with Australian theatrical entrepreneurs.

As well as the reviews and the long runs, the future of musical theatre seems assured.

This singing-dancing form of musical theatre is curiously American (among the earliest musicals was John Philip Sousa's *At Capone's* (1938) and it is on American stages that it thrives).

Among the newest offerings: *Belshazzar Goes to War*, a two man musical by John Grey; *A Day in Hollywood/A Night in the Theatre: The Marriage Dance*, *An Evening of Fanny* by Brecht and Fyfe, *It's So Nice to Be Civilised*, books, lyrics and music by Macki Goss; and *Our Mr. Tense*, a salute to black vaudeville.

Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht are also enjoying a world wide revival, as any devotee of Australian theatre would realise, when in the small frame of *Robyn Archer*, this country possesses one of the greatest interpretations of those writers.

But throughout the world, other authors are turning their pens to other musicals.

With *Jesus Christ Superstar* finally off at the West End after a seven year season, Andrew Lloyd Webber has written another musical entertainment.

At the Dublin Theatre Festival at the end of this month, a new musical based on the life of Nora Bernatchez Joyce will be premiered.

During a time when the life of a second rate Argentinian "actress" can provide the material for an award winning musical, who would mock the prospect of seeing the life and times of Mrs Joyce on stage.

With luck, it will have the ingredients of music and entertainment which theatre goes on to enjoy at the moment.

It is a nice some critics regard with cynicism.

Some even advance the theory that when there are no major books to convert with, musical theatre comes into its own.

Musical Theatre is to its audiences what the circus were to the Ancient Romans, they say.

That seems a bit cerebral, really. It should simply be entertainment.

That is what the audience is paying for.



Forwards the crowd, from back row, the show's star, Rosalind Wiseman, in Texas

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LOUIS

BY JEREMY RIDGMAN

"It occurred to me while watching my men. What was going on inside them... it would be a mistake to believe that what they experienced — the hallucinations — wasn't a part of them. What they saw... the things that went on in their heads... can they ever see the world the same way they saw it before?"

So the Captain in *Inside the Island* reflects upon the hallucinations of an outfit of Australian soldiers in 1912 — hallucinations brought about by a poisonous fungus in the wheat sown on them by an uncaring landowner and which have resulted in an apocalyptic inferno of rage, murder and self-mutilation. And so Louis Nowra, surely the most imaginatively challenging of Australian playwrights, jumps the rails and takes his writing in a slightly different direction. *Inside the Island* is the last play in what he calls the 'first coil' of a spiral-like thematic development in his work as a whole, and the first in the second coil. As the titles of the plays in that first phase suggest, *After Power* and *Power*,

Nowra has concerned himself with the visionary malgre lui, the conflict of some inner perception with the forces of language and imposed knowledge and the resulting power implications. Here at last, and as if to satisfy some of his critics, he places his action in Australia (though in a safe historical distance) and takes the road that turns his journey into the psyche in the direction of a quest for the Australian heart of darkness.

Yet we are not far from the world of *Firestorm*. Lillian Dawson, the matriarchal owner of a wheat farm, bears an uncanny resemblance to Madame Lynch, with her benevolently despotic sense of culture and refinement and the results of such gated conviction are equally horrific in both cases. As its title suggests, *Inside the Island* feels the link between the individual and the collective, communal psyche. As the apocalyptic character at the centre of Nowra's radio play, *The Song Remains*, says, "We are islands full of blood my head is still full of thoughts."

Nowra is, in more senses than one, a writer of "vision". Not only does he write about vision, but his whole dramaturgy is founded on an acute visual sense. What is most astounding however is the fact that he has such a remarkable vision of his work as a whole. He speaks and writes with the authority and perspicacity of an objective critic about his own work, although diffidently, aware of the scepticism with which an author's remarks on his own output need to be treated at times. More significantly, he has a formidable sense of perspective, a sort of grand design in which each play, even his non-dramatic and non-literary ventures, is a stage in the development of themes and images. Even encountering his plays for radio, one realises they are like finely wrought chamber pieces, akin to those

of Schubert and Beethoven, in which thematic strands are teased out or developed in microcosm, to be amplified in broader norms in the works for the stage. One is reminded both of Ionesco's principle of the play being a means of discovery for the dramatist, rather than of demonstration and of Edward Bond's tendency to develop themes through cross-reference, even contradiction between individual plays.

Inside the Island, then, besides shedding light onto some of the complexities of his earlier plays, begins his exploration of new territory. The potential for savagery and violence is a crucial theme in *The Precious Woman*, which will be performed by the Sydney Theatre Company in November and is to be developed in Nowra's adaptation of Wedekind's *Lulu*, which Jim Sharman is to direct next year. Nowra finds the existing version by Peter Barnes inorganic in its portrayal of a doll-like Lulu and with Judy Davis down to step into the shoes of the great Louise Brooks and Robyn Nevin to play the eponymous role in *The Precious Woman* Nowra is consciously moving into the area of strong central female roles, of which he feels there is a dearth in Australian theatre. In *The Precious Woman*, the coerced wife of a Chinese warlord learns of her husband's infidelity and her son's tyrannical cruelty and rises to become the figurehead of a rebellion. Nowra speaks with amazement of the feminist who bailed him up over the portrayal of Lillian Dawson in *Inside the Island* as destructive, but was placated by the more positive light in which Su-ling, the precious woman, was to be presented.

It is no coincidence that Nowra at one time intended to train as a painter and has had a fascination with cinema since childhood (he wrote the script for Rex Cramphorn's recent experimental

NOWRA

film. *8 1/2* and although he has been approached to write many more, tends to turn them down in frustration of the 'war of attrition' that can sometimes characterise the relationship between a writer and film director, with the writer's vision gradually being sacrificed.) He works essentially through images and through a strong visual sense in which characters become 'figures in a landscape'. Staging his plays is no easy task as a result, one production of *Visions* failed by attempting to perform it in the round, thus missing the essential pictorial quality of Rex Cramphorn's flat, end-on designs at the Parris, a quality Nowra likes for its strong sense of a point of view. The 'unhumble theatre' as he calls it, burgoons with strong, evocative images, sometimes bizarre, always memorable, in *Inner Power*, an obese man being sponsored by a dwarf, in *Visions*, a hill-top tea party from which a battle is being observed, in *Inside the Island*, a wounded, hallucinating soldier sitting amid the ashes of a ruined house and in *The Precious Woman*, a girl playing a violin to a graveyard of people, buried alive.

Nowra has a keen eye for the image or event which fascinates by its allusive quality, its ability to suggest a hinterland of meaning. *The Chorus*, which he lightheartedly dubs a 'coffee table book for depressives' is a collection of newspaper items made by him over a number of years, each conjuring up a bizarre world of suffering or despair beyond, each a little window onto a dark new landscape of human experience. This habit of collecting images feeds into his playwriting, the macabre image of the zoo burning in *Visions* for example originating from a report of an event during the Cambodian war. Resistance emerges time and time again as the key to Nowra's approach to writing and if, as Rick Bellingham once remarked, he is one

of the few Australian playwrights writing beyond the limits of domestic patience, it is only in search for the detached situation which will have a more resonant, ambiguous value.

One is not surprised to learn that Nowra is one of the most vociferous critics of the naturalistic tendency in Australian theatre. 'Wonder' is a



TONY SHELTON AND ROBERT ALEXANDER
IN *WONDER* PRODUCTION OF *INNER
POWER* PHOTO: PALL MALL

quality he feels theatre should retain if it is to compete with other art forms, thus his 'intentions' range from the German romantic, Novalis, through Marquis to the mysterious quasi-expressionistic film director, Werner Herzog: he is ardently trying to forge a drama capable of dealing with that area for the communal psyche so far only treated by novelists such as Randolph Stow and Patrick White, the latter a writer who has expressed great admiration for *Inside the Island*.

Metaphor and ambiguity are his intentions, rather than the polemical argument which gives reviewers their two column rant on a plate (he does feel that Australian audiences need to be acclimatised gradually into a play's atmosphere and situation, rather than shocked from the outset. He was brought up very much in the tradition

of J.C. Williamson, one of the only contemporary playwrights to come from a theatrical family in fact, for although it has not been exploited for publicity purposes, he is the nephew of Bob Herbert, whose *No Natives, No Paid Drill* has been staged by the S.T.C. in the same season as the forthcoming *The Precious Woman*.

Certain actors Nowra tends to find are particularly suited for his plays. He speaks highly of Tyler Coppel, for example, who plays the demanding role of Andy, the half-wit, in *Inside the Island*, and refers to the 'pure, intense force' of Judy Davis, who has already appeared in *Visions*, as well as *Inside the Island*. John Bell, director of the first production of *Inner Power* and currently taking the Drama Theatre by storm in Nowra's translation of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, he admires for his ability to 'think physically'.

In his work with actors, indeed his formulation of roles around specific performers, Nowra might well be seen as coming in from the cold: he is one of the many theatre workers who have made the move to Sydney from Melbourne, his home city and the one where his work has not been performed. He is impressed with the ease with which collaboration and cross-fertilisation can take place in the Sydney theatre, exemplified by the exchange of ideas and personnel between Bernard and the S.T.C., where he is now engaged as an associate director. The opening of the S.T.C.'s new alternative studio theatre will involve him more in the job of directing, a development which, combined with his writing and translating (he is engaged in the long term project of translating the whole of Kleist's work for the stage) will make him the nearest we have to the German model of a dramaturg: and such an introduction must speak volumes for the maturation of theatre in this country.

INTERVIEW

Dickens as People's Theatre

by Irving Wardle

When David Edgar's two-part adaptation of *Nicholas Nickleby* opened at the Aldwych in July, there were those among my esteemed colleagues who sat through the eight and a half-hour performance which the RSC had been rehearsing for six months and then asked what it was all for. Why not stay at home and read Dickens instead?

I can think of two possible answers to that. In the first place *Nicholas Nickleby* is Dickens's most theatrical work. Apart from its direct treatment of the mid-Victorian stage through the Crummles family, the novel is densely populated with role-playing characters: Squeers, the legacy-hunting knave; the villainous Sir Mulberry Hawk, in fact everyone along Nicholas's route including the finally unmasked Ralph Nickleby is obsessively concerned with the presentation of self as everyday life. To offer the collection of parts to an acting company is like throwing gasoline to a bon.

However previous companies have risen to the Dickensian bait and usually with lamentable results. Another, and much better justification for this magnificent RSC show is that, for once, the theatre has found a way of doing it.

The problem of staging this author we well know: Dickens writes on a scale that defies right plot construction, the unity of his novels appear more through multiple variations on a central theme than on a central action, and, although he writes in prose of verve, his various characters are dramatically the feeblest elements in his work. Nicholas Nickleby is no exception. As a film producer once remarked of Robert Daltrey:

He's nothing common does not mean

And so on even not the comic

All these obstacles have been fully recognised by the RSC team, and so far as *Nicholas* is concerned they have been solved partly by allowing him urbane chunks of narrative, so that he changes from a sentimentalised paragon into an

inner story-teller and partly by giving the part to Roger Rees — physically the complete Dickens hero, with his unruly mop of black hair, and lean, impetuous movement (his trousers always seem to be flapping in the high wind) who also projects a personal dynamism over and above his duties to the script. Dickens does drop some useful clues on Nicholas's development, such as the early confession of "my carried readiness to adapt myself to any society that chance offered." And with this, Mr Rees thoroughly cooks his goose at Dotheboys Hall (practically leaping over the lead table at the moving Tilda Swinton) well before he breaks the cane over Squeers's back and changes from a well-meaning innocent into a man with a mission.

With its carefully established, the rest of Trevor Nunn's production takes up where the latest and finest in the RSC's series of community shows. Dickens may only have hit home ground with the middle-class, but one does not want that limitation with the most universal of the company, filling in the story-so-far by telling a half-sensational back and forth, now in the personae of John Napier's all-embracing act, which lets the eye like a ship's deck, lying a league to the house with an upper gallery that gives the cast access to the dress circle and a platform that trucks magically on and off for the characters' coach trips round the country.

The famous scenes go off with their expected impact: the humiliation of Squeers, the escape of Smike, the Mulberry Hawk duel, the suicide of Ralph. But even at their most socially indictment, the point is never lost that this is a grossly comic work, and however terrifying Ben Kingsley's Squeers may be to the boys, to the spectator he is a ridiculous brutality figure: half taken in by his own ludicrous pretensions to faculty.

You would expect such characters to spring to life. Where the production takes you by surprise is in its power to intercut melodrama with farce, to relate Regency and Victorian forms of behaviour to cross-out between parallel episodes, and generally to show a wide spectrum of mean, ridiculous, dangerous, alcoholic, and near fanatic crimes acting their heads off for personal advantage, and surrounding the Crummles family whose coverage is not so that for them acting is their acknowledged

way of life. For this reason, there is more than ample fun in allowing the Crummles to take the stage in the last act of their adapted *Alvaro and Juliet*, complete with a dead-drunk Duke of Vinosa and a travesty Bernini who brings her beloved Paris back to life. The Crummles (including their quaterlions rogues and the dreaded Infant Phenomenon) are a community, and nothing establishes the bond between them and the house more surely than their big gamey number after the *Alvaro* finale, with Graham Crowden as the manager whipping off his red property hat on the final cadence.

By contrast, when we get to the death of Ralph, we see the face of a social critic. In novel after novel, Dickens looks up to a class, showing the drooping of a man who has cancelled the human bond and is already as good as dead. How do you stage it? In this case, as John Woodvine wanders round London finding every door that against him, the company themselves turn into the city, lining up to form rows of closed doors, dead ends, an ever narrowing formation that ultimately drives him home to his watched attic and the book in the ceiling. At the end of it, run, the production was stirring the audience into roars and standing ovations the like of which I have not seen for twenty years, no doubt that has something to do with our depressive plunge into the Brezhnev era, but it certainly gives the lie to those who deny the possibility of recreating a "people's theatre."

Space allows me only to welcome Benetti's *Gulliver* at the National Theatre as a beautifully done and long overdue revival and as yet another homecoming production for John Dexter who should never have gone away in the first place.

Music and Laughter

by Karl Lavett

Music and laughter mixed in the right proportions is an elixir sought by many a producer. To a great number of theatre-

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gives these two elements are synonymous with — "Well, I mean, that's Entertainment."

Three current New York productions that seem to have found just the right mixture are currently making many people (including their producers) happy.

Happiness is certainly evident at the Village Gate where *One Mo' Time* has settled in for a long run. The scene is the black vaudeville circuit in New Orleans in 1926. It is the concept of Verneil Bagneris (who also plays the male lead and directs the

show) for us to see one complete performance, before and behind the curtain, of Northa Williams and her touring company.

The personal dramas backstage of the four-member company are punctuated by stage performances of a series of wonderful songs, helped along by an on-stage female pianist. The New Orleans Blue Serenaders that includes Jabbe Smith on trumpet. The material has been lovingly selected by Bagneris and the whole evening, including the backstage storylines, has an authentic feel to it. Performed by a first

class company it is also very funny as well as very beautiful. In the cabaret setting at the Village Gate, with the audience encouraging the performers of *One Mo' Time* onto greater (and bawdier) deeds, black vaudeville in 1926 New Orleans does not seem that far away. Verneil Bagneris is to be congratulated on this sunny and splendid revelation.

Alloccomato recycles also at the heart of *A Day In Mathisland/A Night In The Universe*. It's a spoof of classic movies in general and the Marx Brothers in particu-



Art in Action, Paula Burrows; Art, Sarah as The Pirates of Penzance

collar. The central conceit of this musical revue is that the ushers of Grauman's Chinese Theatre, after testing in to some satirical thoughts and sentimental notions concerning thimble movies, become the cast in the main feature, a Marx Brothers comedy.

Written by two Americans, Dick Vosburgh (book and lyrics) and Frank Lazarus (music), *Redwood* (Dolby Digital London, but as directed and choreographed by Tommy Tune, I suspect the show has a whole new look. The inventive Mr Tune's musical seems to be "When in doubt, dance it." This policy provides the show's best moments when the cast recovers the Holly-

wood way house, the show's meagre resources are unfettered way beyond its means. Likeable but thin material is stretched even thinner and no amount of fast footwork can hide this.

The quality of the material is hardly the problem in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Peasants of Provence*. This new production at the Delacorte Theatre in Central Park (under the auspices of Joseph Papp's Public Theatre) has attracted much attention through the casting of rock singer Linda Ronstadt as her first stage role. Another young rock singer, Rex Smith, whose plausibility seems to have passed me by, is cast as the juvenile opposite Mr. Romaldi. Among this attractive young couple no

base of his style and where it didn't work with Shakespeare it seems in tune with Gilbert and Sullivan. From the opening when a top ship invents the back drop to become a full-sized pirate-slaying brig, the comic convention does not let up all evening. There are lapses, of course. The daughters in their opening choros look and sing like refugees from the Big Spender number in *Sweet Charity*. But these moments are counterbalanced by many warty hits. With the dynamic and discipline of Sullivan's means to keep Mr Leach on course the production succeeds in exactly capturing the Gilbertian spirit of fun. The whole evening is a jolly romp.



Perdita Lopez: *Das of Germany*; Frank Lazarus as *Redwood*; Lazarus

wood Production Code while executing an intricate tap dance.

While Mr Tune may be inventive, the creators of the material are much less so. A musical segment, highlighting some movie golden oldies dangerously in poses to comparative paucity of Mr Lazarus' melodies in the Marx Brothers parody David Garrison as Groucho gets off some true Groucho-style nose-inquiries, but there are large and patchy new invention is nowhere to be seen.

The show also suffers from a classic case of "Broadwayitis." That is essentially a title revue whose soporific enthusiasm and energy become its charm and one is likely to forgive much in the face of these admirable performers. Redesigned for a large Broad-

way house, the show's meagre resources are unfettered way beyond its means. Likeable but thin material is stretched even thinner and no amount of fast footwork can hide this.

The director, one of the Public's regular stable, is Willard Leach. He has previously directed Shakespearean productions at the Delacorte, where with little respect for the text he vulgarized some of the comedies beyond recognition. He even succeeded in making Meryl Streep's Katherine in *Taming of the Shrew* a noisy, boring, obnoxious character. Without doubt he is a genius with the common touch.

Leach is, however, a font of comic invention, often inappropriate, but a font none the less. His technique is to shoot a throw and aimless into the air knowing not where it will hit the mark. Inevitably in the

This is not a production for punners. Songs are borrowed from other Gilbert and Sullivan shows, there are clever puns in hand for Mr Ronstadt's solos. What it does prove is that the piece is near optimum life and it is spent in right the real well follow.

Mr Ronstadt is yet to come. George Ross's Major General is the very model of professionalism. Kevin Kline's Prince King again proves he is that rare combination of a talented actor, a deft comedian and a good singer.

The experience has been a huge success and *The Peasants* will be sailing onto Broadway in December. Sullivan's music and Gilbert's laughter will be heard there for many months to come.

FILM



BY LINDA THOMAS

Touch and Go and Final Cut

Two major films to be released in October have nothing in common apart from the fact that both may bring a blush to the cheeks of Job and Pie, seeing that they have had an injection of Government money in the form of Queensland Film Corporation assistance.

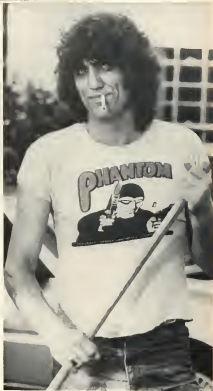
They are *Touch and Go*, in which comic does pay, and *Final Cut* which features a good deal of bare female flesh and drug induced hallucination, blood seeping from bodies into a Barker Paradise swimming pool and lesbian knees.

Touch and Go written by Peter Yeldham, offers variations on a theme of rothory. A trio of young women apply the proceeds from bank break-ins etc to a hard-up friend in charge of a school for wayward children (or something like that) finding an additional incentive for crime in the fun they get out of it. Paula is rich, married and bored. Eva is an actress specialising in lookalike movies. Millicent runs a locksmith's business. Paula is the leader, and when a really big job comes along - the chance for a big haul on a secret island off the Queensland coast - she masterminds an extraordinarily intricate operation.

It requires the services of several more girls. Gina, Sue and Helen - experts in underwater swimming, self-defence and telephone wire cutting. Which brings together a fair sample of female acting talent, with Chantal Clouston, Wendy Hughes, Carmen Duncan, Jeanne Dryden, Liddy Clark and Christine Anker. I hope they all got well paid, because the movies really don't do much for their reputations.

The men involved are Brian Blain as Paula's husband, a businessman, Jon English, displaying a thick warthog, as a layabout gardener, John Bluthal as the owner of the resort, Vasco Martin as a thwarted cop.

The film was directed by Peter Maxwell.



Jon English displaying a thick warthog in *Touch and Go*.



Carrie and Michael and director Jonathan Davron in "Something Completely Different" of *And Now*

an English film and TV director who has been permanently in Australia for ten years, and produced by John Peltari, an Englishman associated for thirty years with US and UK films. The money for it came not only from the QFC but also from the Australian Film Commission. It will be released by Greater Union, has an NRBC rating and runs for one and a half hours.

Despite several long boring patches, there is sufficient going on in its ninety minutes to attract uncritical audiences. It unfortunately highlights a tendency by its director to let his principals over-act to the extent that each one appears as a kind of stand-up comic, unrelated to plot or fellow actors.

And Now, written by Jonathan Davron and Ross Denery and directed by the latter, is a fantasy about a fantasy. Nothing that occurs in the film is possible, nor are

the characters in any way believable. It relies entirely on the wish that a number of ingredients such as the Gold Coast, big motor cruises, (which they call yachts) blondest, sexless, bar-girls, film cameramen, journalists and high rise apartment buildings, if lumped together in a film will have a glamorous, much, even if it is patently apparent that none of these is glamorous in-itself. The film has something of the same spurious flavour of that late unlamented Michael Thorndell film, *The Australia*.

The Cameraman is played by Lou Brown, who made his screen debut in *The Anderson*. In the time elapsed since then he has picked up some unattractive acting tricks. As the theme develops he tries to do a "cinema scene" (what scenes are committed to its name) programme on a service shop (he looks unimpressed and quotes French poetry) who may be a drugg-

runner, or a procurer of girls for his friends, or simply rich and idle. His name is Doreme (very sinister) and he is played by partly David Glenistering. Others in the cast are Jennifer Cluff and Natalie Johnson, also a bit sinister, which can be translated as bisexual.

The action is pretty hard to follow, and a reading of the synopsis from Welger Productions Ltd, courtesy of Greater Union who are putting it out, did not enlighten me much further. Some people appear to die but don't, some die but don't appear to. The makers say it is written and produced in the European style. Well, who knows? There is more than one European style, but I can say that this is not Bergman's, nor Fellini's, nor Bunuel's, nor Bertolucci's.

It is rated M and runs for eighty two minutes.

DANCE



BY WILLIAM
ABLES

The Dance Scene in Europe — part 1

Although the dance ballet scene in Europe in the second half of 1980 is not the healthiest it's ever been, it is at least a bit brighter than it was in 77/78. There were practically no good invitations or opportunities anywhere in Europe. Jan Kylan, having recently taken over the Artistic Directorship of the Nederlands Dans Theatre from Hans Kroll, was still a relatively unknown quantity and therefore everyone was waiting on their heels. Now he gave a little more attention, although to what extent this might have been due to the greater influx of tourists on the Continent as a spin off from the Olympic Games is not calculable.

But one can still sense a serious malaise of lethargy and lack of purpose within the dance world. It certainly doesn't apply to the ballet world alone of course, one only has to take a look at the current theatrical offerings in London, or the opera scene all over Europe to realise that. Somehow, everyone seems to be waiting for a harder crack to strike. Then again, the current economic social climate being what it is at the moment, I suppose a visitor could be forgiven for reading such dark meanings into what is nevertheless, a malaise.

There are companies trying to keep the flag of new invention flying of course, like the NOT, or the Royal Dutch National Ballet, but elsewhere the Ballet of the Paris Opera, Royal Ballet, Royal Danish Ballet and others of their ilk are turning inward, going back to the tried and true, the costume dramas and the often banal ballet dissemination kind of works.

A useful case in point would have to be the Royal Ballet's latest gift to the Royal Family, Frederick Ashton's *Rhapsody* created especially for the Queen Mother's 80th birthday and choreographed for Leslie Collier and Mikhail Baryshnikov. From an audience point of view it is an undemanding ballet, very prettily dressed and danced to

pretty music (Bachman's *Rhapsody* on a theme of Paganini). It is plotless and abstract, yet not quite so boring and challenging like Balanchine's plotless works, in short a warm, lyric ballet.

However, to be fair the work was made a gift to the Royal Ballet as to anyone else. The corps de ballet especially is given some grateful and expansive dancing, from the grand opening drills to the leaping, spinning solos for the men. All of it calls for a quick and apt understanding of the music, and while masculinity has always been a strength of the Royal Ballet. In the final account, the work was created on Baryshnikov and it is obvious a lot of it was built on his particular abilities, the huge leaps and effortless ballet and he certainly makes the most of it.

One wonders what will become of some of the Royal's larger works as time goes by. Kenneth Macmillan's *Manon* and *Manon* for example. *Manon* was created to fill an apparent chasm in Macmillan's contract that as resident choreographer of the Royal Ballet, he is expected to create one full length story ballet a year.

There are some glorious, swooning and passionate moments in the ballet, but the greatest stumbling block to total enjoyment

is the intractability of the story. There are so many things happening within the often adequately developed plot, one gives up making any sense of the work at all and you lose the dancing part by that time. It is down the dancing into so many segments of padding and obscenity. Eg, glamorous they may be, but because the cause is not defined, the pattern, structure and development of them is not understood and the work as a whole remains out of focus.

Manon strikes me as a work, deliberately created to keep up the Royal's fading image as a company devoted to the grand manner of dancing, a repository of everything that is classical and grand in pure ballet. Say to say, concurrent evidence, both in terms of the works created and often in the way they are danced, that is clear that is not being substantiated.

The Royal Danish Ballet on the other hand, is palpably containing that tradition, not by being a great magnet to all forms of classicism but by cherishing and rediscovering the works of their greatest choreographer August Bournonville, the centenary of whose death was celebrated last year by an entire week of his better performed in his old theatre in Copenhagen.

The ballets of Bournonville are exquisite



The Royal Danish Ballet: A Folk Tale



Leif Apperly and Anne Jørgensen in *A Folk Tale*



Ole Anderson and Mary Jørgensen in *Berndt in Brage*

fragrances, there are few works left that remain whole, the exception being the wonderful *La Sylphide*. They are based on a certain style and method of attack that have become enshrined as a complete dance technique in their own right. It is a style built on speed, lightness and airborne grace, yet one that also demands a thorough knowledge of the art of classical dance.

Most of the ballets are folk tales inextricably entwined with folk character and customs. The music is an extension of the dancing and vice versa: it is a unique and delicate manner of communication and incorporation and, it hardly needs to be added, one that most other ballet companies are incapable of achieving without long exposure to the manner and the training that is only available within the Royal Danish Ballet school.

For *From Denmark* is basically a jolly mass of character dances. Being set in a distant past that is being visited by members of the Danish Navy, there are Spanish fandangoes, tangoes, gypsy dances and negro dances. There are some laughable caricatures of national types in the work but the overall feeling is of a lighthearted celebration of human diversity. It is all characterised in images of movement wonderfully consonant and fresh, full of genuine touches of elegant invention.

Acropolis in Brage (created in 1951) is a simple tale of three brothers who are given magical gifts, a ring that makes one a great leader, a sword that makes a noble brave soldier and for the third a lute that makes everyone dance. There are so many details, plot turns and so much infectious dancing that the eye cannot take it all in at once.

A Folk Tale (1956) is a work close to the heart of the Danes, dealing as it does with the comic-dramatic mingling of the world of humans and that of elves, dwarves and trolls. The story is basically that of a girl, Hilde, who has been exchanged with a troll child at birth but, after many adventures, is reunited with her real family and to a young man, Jøker (Joker) who falls in love with her. Most of the character dancing comes from two troll brothers, Dunder and Valerik, one gentle and endearing, the other a wild, bad-tempered wretch, but there are scenes for both worlds to meet in and dance and the final image is of a community and a people at peace with themselves and totally familiar with the supernatural. As for the dances, being totally at one with the theme and the dance style, they could be nothing else but superb and they are technicians of the first order. Rarely have I seen women so elegant yet so human, so much so graceful yet virile.

Next month I hope to give some mention to other companies performing in Europe, the NDT, Ballet of the 20th Century, Hamburg Ballet and Wuppertal Dance Theatre.

Music and dance - a national symposium at the University of Western Australia

by Terry Owen

If I was a betting woman, I'd have taken even money that Perth's dance audience would never have expected to see a home-grown live performance of *Les Noirs*, the ballet with words and music by the great Igor Stravinsky. But there it was on stage at the University of Western Australia's College Theatre, the highlight of the 4th National Symposium organised by the Musicological Society of Australia during the August University vacation.

The three-day symposium had as its theme "Music and Dance" and the Organising Committee under the chairmanship of President Professor David Tanley brought together a bunch of musicologists, anthropologists, philosophers, students, and recreational dance lovers like the Galbraith Foundation's Peter Winton to discuss, pontificate on and enjoy a wide range of topics which reflected the society's aim of encouraging musical research in Australia.

There were a number of dance performances, beginning with an 18th century French Divertissement, *Apollon, Le Nair et Cassan* performed at the Canberra dancer by the University's Baroque Dance Ensemble under the direction of Margaret Mulina. The Stravinsky work was preceded by the Roppon Les Renaissance Dancers of Melbourne directed by Helga Hill in an intelligently conceived but disappointingly dull programme of dances of the Renaissance.

Les Noirs is a celebration in four scenes of the ceremonies associated with a Russian village wedding, calling for a choir of some forty voices led by four soloists. It was played and sung by the University's Collegium Musicum directed by David Tanley, using the original scoring for four parts, seven percussionists, choir and soloists. Australian choreographer Don Asker, recently in contact with his small company Human Years at the Australian National University in Canberra, was commissioned to choreograph a new production of the work for the West Australian Ballet Company's twelve dancers, and he clearly found this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity stimulating but exhausting.

Speaking briefly before the performance, which was produced with financial assistance from the WA Arts Council. Mr



The WA Ballet Company's *Les Noirs*

Asker emphasised the passionate humanism which infuses Stravinsky's writing. As it happened, Mr Asker's photographic system on was most faithful in those passages where in dance terms he was expressing the wealth and power of the village community's rituals as they joined with each other in celebrating the wedding.

There was a lovely passage of writing for mother and daughter early in the work, but in other duet passages, notably the bridal duet at the end, the choreography seemed trapped by the enormous complexity of the score's muscular rhythms into giving the dancers too much to do without each musical phrase. And the young dancers hadn't had enough time or experience to expand into the characteristics and emotional truths of their roles, so the joy and the spiritual ecstasy of Stravinsky's writing was muted. Yet the evening was an exciting and satisfying one, with the energies of performers and the standing-room-only audience fusing in celebration of one of the great dance works of the century.

Equally satisfying and marvellously instructive for the musicologists in particular was a contemporary dance workshop on the symposium's final day, with Don Asker and members of the WA Ballet Company taking a piece of music for generic orchestra by student composer

Amanda Vincent and providing the rare experience of seeing choreography happen right before your very eyes. These players of the University's Gamella ensemble, who are all students of distinguished British composer Roger Smalley, sat in a spread semi-circle around the small Dolphin Theatre stage instead of in the usual tight row formation. Each musician worked directly with two dancers, helping them identify his instrument's distinctive sound and the shape of its musical phrasing. For an hour they worked from scratch on a seven-minute section of the 25 minute long piece while we, the audience, moved behind the around them on stage, watching the dancers worriedly trying to feel as well as hear their own moves and begin to open up the movements Asker had devised for them. At the same time each musician was trying to collaborate with his dancers and to maintain the music's momentum and structure. Asker moved from one group of performers to the next, persuading them to begin to express their own individual responses to the music, to feel the weight of the musical phrases, warning them when gestures became too "baroque". It was an absorbing learning experience for everyone involved, particularly the audience and gave powerful flesh and blood significance to the symposium's title.

OPERA



BY DAVID
GRIER

VSO's Rigoletto and three AO Revivals

August was very much revival month for the Australian Opera, and almost no month at all for the rest of the nation's opera companies.

Three AO revivals made their winter season debut at the Sydney Opera House, and a couple of other productions premiered earlier in the season completed their runs.

By far the most fascinating event of the month was the premiere in Ballarat of a new Victoria State Opera production in *Rigoletto* designed specifically for touring — an event which proved to be a personal triumph for baritone John Wood, playing the title role, as well as a considerable design success for Malcolm Smeed and a conducting success for Richard Daval.

Rigoletto is far from an easy opera to stage for a series of one and two-night stands in venues with decidedly less than capital city facilities, and this production dealt efficiently and effectively with its dilution on a purely technical level. More important, its vocal and orchestral standards were sufficiently high to be good examples for an art form whose flag is rarely unfurled in the provinces.

There is, of course, an unusually agonising decision to be made very time an entrepreneur approaches the problem of presenting opera outside a major city: an inevitable choice to be made between the artistically desirable and the economically feasible. Even in the major international capitals of the art form, not to mention Sydney and Melbourne, the artistic ideal is never — well, hardly ever — attainable because of the inherent extravagance of the costs involved.

In view of that perennial problem of the entire art form, then, how good ought to be deemed good enough for the bush — given the fact that opera can never be economi-

cally viable in terms of paying its own way at the box office?

The simple rule of thumb in the Australian provinces, these days, seems to be moving up the artistic scale — which is as it ought to be. Opera with pseudo-accommodation is better than no opera at all, but it really is not good enough for cities — even the 30,000-plus that dot the more fertile tracts of the Australian landscape.

In Ballarat, and the other centres involved in the intermittent *Rigoletto* tour of Victoria and Tasmania that runs to the end of the year, the VSO is being backed by an orchestra assembled from within the precincts of the Faculty of Music at the University of Melbourne, but only rarely, as in the Ballarat performance I saw, did one need to make any allowance at all for that fact.

Indeed there is one, if admittedly only one, precedent in which there is a positive advantage in provincial opera touring: these days the fact that those same provincial venues that are admittedly deficient in the theatrical mod cons of the 1980s are also considerably more suited to the developing operatic voice than the more capacious metropolitan opera venues.

Possibly, but only just so, allowance ought to have been made in assessing John Wood's *Rigoletto* because it scored its inaugural success in Ballarat rather than in Melbourne. I incline to think not. This was a *Rigoletto* of unshakable authenticity both in musical terms and dramatic ones. The rest of the VSO's touring *Rigoletto* was rough and go in terms of the theatre proclaimed above, but Wood's was a performance that would have held its own just about anywhere.

The proof that this was so came, as it happened, very early in the piece — following *Rigoletto*'s brief soliloquy during Act I Scene 2, between his encounter with the assassin Sparafucile and his first meeting in the opera with his daughter Gilda.

This soliloquy was so purposefully delivered that it provoked a spontaneous round of applause that had even more for the artistic recognition of the Ballarat audience than it did against their familiarity with the ethos of applause during opera performances.

And Wood carried through with flying colours the considerable promise of that start, emphasising in every turn the humanity and fatherliness of the character rather than its physical deformity and chip-on-shoulderedness, he probably came

as close as possible to making the piece dramatically relevant to today's burghers of Ballarat.

This *Rigoletto* was above all the loving father defending his daughter's honour under siege, a man in a domestic situation any audience could sympathise with from the word go. Given a little more skill in the makeup and production departments it could have been a thoroughly stunning performance, but Wood was not made up to look quite old enough to be the probable father of a love object, and the vocal lather, daughter scenes involving him and Gilda were not effectively stage-managed.

Nor was the quality of his co-performers up to Wood's. Rosemary Hople was a promising Gilda still at the apprentice level of achievement, and Geoffrey Harris a duke devoid of the vocal charms that must supplement his amiable benevolence if the inherently quite unsympathetic character is to achieve its full potential impact.

Ian Counsell was a splendid Sparafucile, but John Marston's Sparafucile failed to make the sort of menacing impact the part demands.

Such criticisms, though, don't really matter all that much within the context of a basically splendid touring production. Would that everything presented at the Sydney Opera House by the national company, during the period under review, had been as close to the artistic mark as the touring *Rigoletto*.



John Wood as Rigoletto

The revival of the AO's 1974 *Barbier de Séville* on August 43 was virtually devoid of the champagne sparkle without which the piece can never succeed. The main culprit was conductor Peter Seymour, whose tempo (particularly in the first act) erred on the sedately slow side. But nothing seemed to come right, at least on opening night, for a cast which featured a large number of new faces.

Gleesa Fowler's Rosina was rather too sharp-tongued and fierce, Richard Grainger's Almaviva all haughty and lipsticked appearance, was grotesque rather than appealing, Gregory Yurchuk's Figaro was discourteously contemptuous though definitely promising of better things to come.

The supporting cast members were of course all veterans of earlier manifestations of this *Barbier*, but I found Alan Light's Bartolo dulcet of all previous readings and Grant Jackson's Basile here singing out incoherently.

On the credit side, it was good to see the piece back in English after one aberration of its last revival in Italian, even if much of the action was so singing it might as well have been in Swedish for all most members of the audience could possibly have understood.

But it was unfortunate that Seymour had to make his AO conducting debut in a piece such as *The Barber*, for its specialist demands in the front-and-backstage department are far removed from the usual demands made on a choral conductor: the area in which he has specialised with ever-increasing success over the past few years. His next scheduled conducting was for the national company at the four performances of Boris Godunov in Adelaide in November, an assignment that ought to suit him a good deal better.

Also during the month under review, three other AO productions I have already reviewed in these columns this year reappeared, two of them with major cast changes for the better.

The Flare, as reviewed early this year during the summer holiday season at the Sydney Opera House, was showing its age rather badly — the magic was absent, the whole thing was something of an ordeal to sit through in the case of improving one's soul rather than a celebration of the profundity that can be achieved within the parameters of the comic opera context, as *The Flare* is at its best.

But its opening night at the end of August, was as close to a triumph as the summer season opening had been close to disaster. The main contributions to the improvement were made by John Falford, a newcomer to the role of Papageno, and Isabel Buchanan, who was returning to the role of Pamina in this production after a considerable time out of operatic seasons in the same role.



Isabel Buchanan and John Falford in AO's *The Magic Flare*

I also felt that Robin Donald, though clearly not yet an ideal Tamino either vocally or dramatically, showed definite signs of potential as a Mozart tenor. At the opening he still seemed to be worried by the vocal demands he was required to make, to the extent that he came close to showing out the high notes as great was the effort involved in reaching them.

When he took things a little easier — in the dialogue with the Speaker outside the temples, for instance, and in the choruses and the less arduous sections of his arias — he produced some very pleasing sounds indeed.

Buchanan has still to lose that fierce coming-of-age at the top of her range that one might have expected to be dulled with increasing experience and maturity, but it is used instead to velvet rather than raw steel, harsh and uncompromising, and besides she looks so winning, particularly as Pamina, that one would be foolish not to forgive her the odd vocal hiccup.

Other significant contributions to the success of this *Flare* reopening came from Rhonda Bruce's Queen of the Night, particularly the second aria whose vocal cultism she negotiated with greater skill and success, and less obvious effort, than ever before, and Neil Warren-Smith's magnetic Sarastro, and George Ross's perennially comic-villainous Monostatos.

But it was Falford's night for prominence in the personal honours department, for his Papageno established him in one shot as a major new acquisition for the Australian Opera. In no way did it suffer from comparison with either of his pre-

decessors in the role in this production, Ronald Macdonald and John Fringle, both of whom were quite outstanding.

The jokes were still basically the same, but in no stage did Falford seem to be even remotely in danger of becoming imitative of the Macdonald or Fringle interpretations of the role, surprisingly often indeed, he found new sources in the dialogue that had escaped them both. And he sang with a constant power and richness of tone never achieved by either of the others. One can hardly wait to see him next year in the title role of *The Marriage of Figaro*.

Finally, a word of praise must go to Richard Bonyage who conducted this opening night marvelously, and to the orchestra and chorus who did what was required of them with great skill and dedication. Though this was a re-opening one could only approach with some little trepidation, in view of the near-disaster of the summer opening, it finally turned out to be quite a memorable event.

Something of the same thing happened on about the same time when the Coppy production of Puccini's *Madam Butterfly* reappeared with Marilyn Zachau in the title role like Leslea Mitchell. Zachau brought all the loose ends of this promising production of one of Puccini's most flawed operas together for the first time — not so much for her singing, everything though it was, as for her consistently commercial re-acting.

She fairly palpitated with acquiescence in her Act 1 encounter with Des Grieux, snatched borders through stifled pleas in Act 2 and readily enough provided the dawning madness during the very post-destruction to make it credible that he should stoop all night in high dodgins, practically sheltered through the window of her prison on her passionate encounter with Des Grieux in Act 3, even managed to make the Act 4 aria vaguely credible despite the fact she is supposed to be singing at the top of her lungs while dying of thirst in the midst of a desert.

The Sutherland Bonyage contest hall version of *Laura di Lammermoor* also reappeared during the month under review, reconfirming the stunning success it had during the summer season at the Opera House before going on tour to Melbourne and Adelaide in serviced, procurement arch version. I had a good deal about this in the April issue of *Theatre Australia*, and there is no need to repeat myself now suffice it to say that seeing it again was akin to pushing oneself awake to reconfirm the whole thing wasn't just a mental aberration, was really as good as it had seemed originally.

It anything, it seemed even more last-rose second time around.

DAVID CYGER is editor of *Opera Australia*.

THEATRE/ACT



STAGE REP
MARGUERITE
WELLS

Genius, Thought and Magic

HURDY GURDY GHOST GUM THE CRUCIBLE JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLLOUR DREAMCOAT

by Marguerite Wells

Notes: Gurdy's Ghost Gums written and performed by the Jaganu Theatre Company, Canberra Playhouse, opened August 1980.

Cost: Betha, Nathan Akewood, Tuckers, Steve Pappas, Corinna, Camilla Bracken, Fred Blagg, Mick and Wally, Fred Blagg, Anne Yellis, Mick, Kate Yellis, other Black Mount Players.

Director: Jon Woodward, Musical Director: David Bates, Designer: Andrew Akewood, Production Stage Manager: Louise Davis, Production Administrator: Catherine Smith, Anne Craig, Lighting: John Wall (notes).

(Production)

The Crucible by Arthur Miller. Louise Southern Regional Theatre Company, London Theatre, Great Hall, NSW, opened August 1980.

Director: John Spinks, Stage Manager: David Bates, Props: Stephen Roberts, Set: John Spinks, Asst. Cost. Lighting: Peter Humphries, Mark Walker, Sound: Brian Roberts, Alan McGowan, Costumes: May Spinks, Rex Pappas.

Cost: Betty Pappas, Megan Lanning, Rex, Sigmond Pappas, Ian Crispin, Tuckers, May Spinks, Nigel Williams, Emma Gayle, Suzanne Watson, Susan Chalmers, Gabrielle Ann Pappas, Wendy Allan, Thomas Palmer, Ted Light, Mary Lewis, Kate Lanning, Mary Warren, Jenny Kelly, John Pappas, Paul Johnson, Gabrielle Rebecca Fraser, Ann Wall, Gail, Cathy, Peter Humphries, Rex, John Hale, Nicholas Blument, Caroline Blument, Frances Margaret Humphries, Fredrick Chappell, Tony Blyth, Maribel Brown, Paul Roberts, John Robertson, Patrick Smith, Deputy Governor, Doreen, John Spinks.

(Production) *Amateur*

Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat by Cid Clark Theatre Company.

Director: Paul Connors, Choreography: Robert Jones, with Gary Pritchard as Pharos.

Canberra is fortunate in that these small halls, customarily called mountains, Black Mountain has recently been crowned with the Black Mountain Communications Tower, commonly known as the hypodermic syringe. The Jaganu Company's children's theatre page for the August school holidays makes the startling revelation that Black Mountain Nature Reserve is



Paul Johnson and Corinna in *The Crucible*

infested by a hellish, semi-anthropoid race of creatures known as Fred Blaggies in a Fred Blagg's.

The play itself is infested with Blacks, scattering all those little persons there feel high, wearing legal wigs and gowns and dashing out waistcoats, who have their well-hooped Pharaohs even stuck into every periodical case from dog dust on the nature strip to the pace of petrol.

Those delightful, somewhat little characters were the waste of genius in a production which was in other respects like the Jaganu's production of *Heaven in the Wilderness* last year, misreading and pleasant. But for small children, whose attention span is very short, it is the individual incidents that make the play a success, not the overall plot. The villain (The Trickster) were a Doctor Who fan and magician that drew a host of recognition and laughter: his hedged parabolic talk, cloak that swirled in a rainbow merry-go-round all over the large stage was fascinating, the masked Carillon, the spirit of the bell tower in the lake who cared for nothing but her collection of sacred symphonies and her isolation, was touching in her self-annoyance.

The Moral of the Story was that the hellish hole-you-head-in-the-mind Freds Blagg, the resurping parabolic Blacks and the selfish misanthropic Carillon could achieve anything, as long as they strove for it together.

The great American contribution to art and literature as well as to the theatre appears to be the grand parabolic that Life is Real, Life is Funniest and Don't You Forget It. There is a considerable convention, very sedate held in Australia, that 'you can't understand something unless you've experienced it' (This is for instance the principle behind 'tangerine'!) This principle is of course false. There are plenty

of people who have a deep understanding of the most scary experiences of others without having gone through them themselves. For such people, a performance of *The Crucible* cannot be anything less than extremely unpleasant, while for others it is probably a salutary prophylactic. Seeing a second production of *The Crucible* within two months left me with no lingering ill, but with a burning desire to get out and away from these appalling people. It was therefore a good production (I wished it hadn't been — I would have loved to have been able to laugh at it.) The small cinema-esque production stage of the Jaganu Theatre makes a conventional set every time but the personnel resources — the number of good actors — who live in or can be coaxed to the large country town are remarkable.

In this production the distinction between the professionals of the cast was not nearly so clear as in their production of *Paul and Persimmon Tuckers* is a very difficult role, because it is so easy to produce a slick, neat caricature of a libardos witch-woman. Mary Spink was strong in the part and the John Spink and Nicholas Lobbie did later the missing professionals for this production) were all thoughtfully cast in less central and dramatic, but none the less important and difficult supporting roles, leaving the central, 'heavy' roles for local actors who handled them with energy and conviction. This was very clever casting, calculated to give maximum incentive to the amateur actors who form the company's stock in trade.

The real joy of the month was the Last Dark Theatre Company's production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*. Choreographer Helen Jones draped a baroque with a kaleidoscope of movement, director Paul Connors filled the production with good humour and gentle satire, and the cast with pleasant, unaffected voices, performed without major pomp, but with delicious and an obvious certainty that what they were doing was worth doing and they were doing it well. They were right on both counts. Gary Pritchard, a grave and pompous Pharaoh who did grave and pompous Elvis impersonations complete with pompous hip-swooshes was extraordinarily funny.

Human hand cannot bear very much reality, as The Post says, and this production was the month's life-saving glass of amnesia. It was shot through with all the magic and wonder that *The Crucible* will-nigglesome and what that the *Heaven Gurdy's Ghost Gums* had only in its Blacks and its hellish Blaggies.

THEATRE/NSW



STATE REP
LUCY WAGNER
EXECUTIVE

A considerable work

INSIDE THE ISLAND

by Robert Page

Inside the Island by Frank Norman. National Theatre Sydney NSW. Opened August 17 1980.

Director: Neil Armfield. Design: Bill Haycock. Composer: Nicholas Jung. Lighting: Keith Edwards. Stage Manager: Neil Simpson.

Cast: George Dawson, Martin Vaughan, Peter Macdonald, John McTernan, John Brown, Brian Sheering, Susan Ferguson, Judy Morris, Gordon Hogg, Tony Bucker, Margaret Claffey, Paul Collins, Andy Ryan, Eugene, Mrs. Harrison, John, Sarah, Brian, Private Officer, Ben, Phillip, Wanda, Carol, Trish, Sam, Phyllis, Mollie, Bill, Gail, Kenneth, Arthur, Martin Harris, Private Muggs, Maxine Coleman. (Production)

Inside *The Island* is a gothic gargantuan of a play. A dozen actors must compare dozens of roles, the set (designed by Bill Haycock) represents a multitude of locations in an isolated island property in New South Wales, and the style moves from realism to grand guignol.

Political plays (and even folk wing plays, and writer Stephen Sewall) too readily depend on extreme metaphors for the present wretched state of capitalism. Their metaphors have the subtlety of hammer blows: the poem are made not with the surgeon's knife, but the sweeping stroke of the sledge. Radical playwrights plunder history for tales of justice. *The Women of Peace* at NIDA or find bizarre gruesome early incidents of the modern world. Edward Bond, Norman's dramaturgical mentor, reaches back to the post-Clara warps. Clara into a symbol of class oppression, but a father involved in the making of his own baby and so on.

What no one can deny the power of such plotting is it seems to bear little resemblance to everyday humdrum, both great too much and given no thought into Marxian dialectic as the operates today.

Norman similarly relies on the dramatic in extremes, an face of Catherine the Great's keeping a prison of violence, the devastation of

civil war resulting from the attempt to forcibly transpose European values on Paraguay. Japan has South American scenes elliptically commenting on the country — he has focused his sights inside the island of Australia. Once again the history method is used, once again the incidents are coherent.

It begins as a mildly racist and sexist "Dad" figure, portrayed with inner power and man-of-the-household domineer by Martin Vaughan, as honest-to-goodness Anne, is reduced to drink by a marriage above his station. The huddles are the universal class imposing their culture and religion on the outback, sponsored by and embodied in Mrs. Dawson (a superb performance by Dana Sheering), marriage of the property landholding and noble terror has dispossessed the aborigines, causes the death of work in the house.



John McTernan and Martin Vaughan
(Dawson) in *Inside the Island*. Photo: Peter Holderness

warfare first rails and prompts the murder of single girls abused by "the Reverend".

The poem in the play would be Chekhovian if its morality were not so rigidly black and white — with an inevitable stripping of dimensionality from the characters and a dissection of the truth, Australia being one of the most socially disoriented countries at the turn of the century.

With the viewpoint secure in the early part of the play, the humor comes readily — for instance the paragon of the servants belittled on the region quaffing the Dawson

cherry like beer — and the callousness, rigidity, prejudice, petty and hypocritical moralizing of class come screaming into every second.

But when in *Vibes* the whistler was snatched from a clash of attitudes, values and economics — here the holocaust is not only accidentally triggered, a plot what the play up to this point seems to be about. In an act of mean generosity (a fine oxymoron) Mrs. Dawson willingly offends male fear on the soldiers — but unknown to anyone it contains regret, a body-rotting and mind-damaging organism (Neil Armfield, the director, answered my question about the possibility with a copy of a *Times* report of 1951 of an instance in France where four people had died from contamination fear). And what begins as that symbol of gentlemanly sportsmanship and fair play, the cricket match, erupts into a grand guignol episode of madness, mayhem, mutilation and murder.

In a welter of expressionistic lighting effects (from Keith Edwards) and amplifying sound effects, dermented characters wheel and cry before us like ghostly gulls in a headwind — but hardly advance the plot much. Father appears to find his daughter raped and mutilated, slashes her on a Lear-with-dread-Cordelia pose and screams "Burn! Burn! Burn!" and the fire effects obligingly go up several levels.

In the calm after the Poe-ish storm — and the House of Dawson falls in both senses the delicate metaphor is left, with the captain and now half-mad seigneur, to survey the ruins and draw the moral.

As the charcoal writes what began as class oppression now appears to be a full scale revolt by Mother Nature herself. And not just against Mother Dawson, but all men who wish to settle this apparently hostile island. The attempts will not on up from within and raise our efforts to make...

Or in the accident a fairly obvious metaphor for the way Australia was dragged on England's apron strings into World War One (the involvement of the old country still being an accident of having naval manœuvres, but not treaties, with the French).

If *Inside the Island* is masterfully flawed, it is because it is a considerable work. Its reach may have made logic grasp, but the impact of its theatrical onslaught is shattering. It is a young and angry play which Norman should be applauded for taking on. The production is another triumph for the intelligence, integrity and vision of Neil Armfield as a director and a testimony that Lewis Norman can only add to his status as a major writer.

Richness with its charm

THEY'RE PLAYING OUR SONG

by Lucy Wagner/State Rep.

They're Playing Our Song. Book by Neil Simon. Music: Marvin Hamlisch. Lyrics: Carol Hefflinger. Directed by AGC Parade Entertainment. AC Williams Productions Ltd. Based on Royal Sydney 1978. Opened August 12 1988.

Director: Philip French, Executive Producers: Robert Sims, Kaye Foster, Producers: Carol Hefflinger, AC Williams. Music and Lyrics by Marvin Hamlisch and Carol Hefflinger. Book by Neil Simon. Lyrics by Carol Hefflinger. Music by Marvin Hamlisch. Directed by Philip French. Based on Royal Sydney 1978. Opened August 12 1988.

Cost: Thomas Givens, John Waters, Susan Walsh, Jacki Weaver with Leigh Chandler, Ray Cummins, Michael Harris, Holly Robinson, Rhonda Barlowman, Linda Noy, Karyn O'Neill, Marshall Anne Sullivan (Producers).

The latest Neil Simon play, a new musical by Hamlisch and Roger Siegel, is a vehicle for two star performers, a staging that demands technical virtuosity. - *They're Playing Our Song* pulls focus on more frills than most popular productions and so allows itself little room for imperfections. Every aspect promises itself for close scrutiny and no one ingredient can be dismissed as ornamental or immaterial.

With this comparatively minimal structure it is greatly to the credit of the creators and production team that the whole matures

blends so smoothly and lightly into a confusion that even manages to combine some richness with charm.

In *Song*, Neil Simon has virtually rewritten *Chaperone* (a far more accurate title) in their early thirties (he is mistaken, she is lyrical) come together after previous involvements. This time it is the girl, Susan, who is dogged by the past, not by a benevolent but by the sleepwalking Leon, living ghost of a dead relationship. Once more we are shown a comically problematical courtship, short period of co-habitation, bliss, separation and return - but all in a more superficial, rigid-free form, appropriate to the different genre.

Some have compromised, though, on a more ornamental character portrayal (the script is deficient, however, on their relationship together - the break up comes almost out of the blue, but is hand-edged. Manhattan style is toned down by the light, buoyant or ballad style Hamlisch music - for which Dale Ruggland and orchestra produce a splendidly mellow yet precise sound - and by the more genteel delivery of Jacki Weaver and John Waters.

Not that the accents or anything as at first, simply the natural Australian emphasis are not so sharp as those of New York. Waters' and Weaver's performances are inevitably different to those of the American productions, but the qualities they bring to the roles make them and the show their own.

As the retiring composer, Vernon Green, for whom music is his only act-

expression, John Waters is predictably understating. He manages to preserve the impression of physical magnitude even while breaking into a sophisticated dance routine. His singing voice is strong and pleasant and his comedy easy and stylish. The reasons for Vernon's destruction of the relationship are not sufficiently articulated in the text, but there is throughout a slight bias in favour of his character, which appears the more vulnerable despite success, and which Waters makes the most of.

Jacki Weaver, though, brings her own lightness and charm to the role of Susan - a typical Simon woman, infamously disorganised and heavily into psycho-analysis. She designates the aggression with a well-tailored and generally of-lan - perhaps at times a little too much (Love Areas on record is much harder), and when in top form sings and dances delightfully. Her acting is strong on the top and mid ranges, but lacks a little in the bass.

The two principals fill the stage so well that the device of a chorus of four localised short-ops for each scene superfluous and intrusive. They make good ball in down appearances, providing good vocal back-up, certainly, but move unconvincingly on the many small sets and divert attention from what works excellently in a two or a three - Leon becomes a very "present" character, person musical.

Something else which is distracting, and measurable on the part of the producers, is the appalling sound system which spoiled several songs on opening night (hopefully it has now been rectified) by taking voices from distant on level to muddled belly within a single phrase, and which even got its own laughs when an embrace destroyed all amplification from the body voices. It is grossly unfair on these two top performers who have more than enough to carry on this show without being made ridiculous by such penny pinching.

It seemed all the more unnecessary by contrast with the technical accomplishment of the many settings produced by involved flying and rolling scenery, such props as a motor and splendid lighting. Only the top operator seemed a little phased by the speed of innovation - the script managed perfectly to accommodate all set changes with a constant succession of modernism.

Despite all the technical complexities, it is Weaver and Waters who bring *Song* to life, who infuse it with the energy, charm and power that makes it one of the most enjoyable musicals of recent years. The same song in the first act is one of the highlights of their performance. A nagging feeling remains that Neil Simon's script does give more depth than it appears in production, but perhaps it is part of the musical tradition that the song and dance and showmanship define any stage in a story told.



John Waters (Vernon) and Jacki Weaver (Susan) in *They're Playing Our Song*. Photo: Bruce Givens.

Distance and Relevance

BEDROOM FARCE THE THREEPENNY OPERA

by John McCallum

Bedroom Farce by Alan Ayckbourn. Hunter Valley Theatre Company. Newcastle N.S.W. Opened 18 August 1988. Director: Anne Norris. Designed by John Wood. Sound Events Production Manager John Woodford. Cast: David Wood, John J. Brinkman, Malcolm Allen, Nicholas Lee, Stephen Morgan. Tractor Farm, Cardiff, Newcastle. See Interview.

The Threepenny Opera by Bertolt Brecht. Collaborators: Elizabeth Macpherson, Karl Wall. Music by Kurt Weill. Librettists: Ralph Manheim, John Wilkes. Hunter Valley Theatre Company. Newcastle N.S.W. Opened 20th August 1988. Director: Anne Norris. Musical Director: John Wilkes. Designer: Caroline Jones. Visual Design by Alan McCallum. Production Manager: John Woodford. Cast: Malcolm Rob Brown, Jonathan Jeremiah Pearson, Allan McFadden, Chris Pearson, Sue Crankshaw, Polly Pearson, Beverly Blankenship, Roger Brown, Frank Gardell, Lucy Betty, Mylene Morgan, Nicholas A. Bell, Nigel, David Wood, Lou Day (singer), Nick Walker, Dale, Ian Coleman, Neil, Marilyn Day, Louise, Maurice, Mind, Yvonne Christine Pearson, Peter (the Reverend), Kenneth Jonathan Morgan, Ron, Nick, John (Glad), Master, Roger, Alan, Barbara, John, Roger, Ron, Michael, Walter, Roger, Caroline, Nigel, David Wood, Neil, Roger, Caroline, Michael, O'Sullivan, Anne, Roger, Caroline, Andrew, Roger.

An actual lot has been happening in Newcastle this year, and a lot of it crammed into the last four weeks. The useless Anne Norris has opened three shows. The Warehouse Theatre has opened a full production of a local play. These shows have leaned up here (plus the King's College Choir). The local Manara Spring Festival has produced a flurry of small productions. John Russell is workshopping what is in effect a new play with the university's Drama Department. And Frodochew T.I.E. has been touring its (local) local schools' show before closing down for the rest of the year. (A show sponsored by the regurgitating funding which seems to dog all Newcastle companies, including the H.V.T.C. and the local ABC television. It all seems rather a lot for a city of 368 000 not renowned for its devoted regional arts patron.)

The H.V.T.C.'s productions of *Bedroom Farce* and *The Threepenny Opera* were originally planned for the opposite seasons. Anne Norris' *Threepenny Opera* with a band and a cast of 18, and a flying entrance in its tiny 200-seat Playhouse, while *Bedroom Farce*, with a cast of 8 mostly in bed, was in the 1988 seat Civic Theatre. Such is the power of economics in

the theatre.

Ayckbourn is an obvious choice for a regional company trying to woo a relatively inexperienced audience: so obvious that it's a wonder people don't step clear of him. In the Civic Theatre, and with Willie Fennell and Pat McDonald repeating their roles from the touring production, the H.V.T.C.'s production was still not the runaway success they had no doubt hoped for. It would be nice to think that this is because Newcastle audiences instinctively recognise the remoteness of these obscure English gongs-on from their lives. Ayckbourn is clever, funny and observant — and, as people are instinctively putting out, he is also very serious, exploring the nervous breakdown



W.I.T.C.: *The Threepenny Opera*

people have over sex — but there is still something unsatisfying about him. Especially in the old-fashioned, richly decorated Civic Theatre *Bedroom Farce* seems rather distant.

There is nothing wrong with the production itself, unless you count the rather weary thickness of the stars, who after all have done it more than 300 times. Pat McDonald gives the sort of performance which gets its biggest laugh at the funny way she pulls at her pyjamas. Willie Fennell is engaging as the elderly husband preoccupied with his leaking roof. The company make up the rest of the cast, with local actor Jill Brinkman fitting in smoothly as Jan. The core company are gradually developing a personal following in Newcastle: but it is hampered slightly by the consequences of having to mount a full season with a company of only 8, and by Anne Norris's commendable commitment to give, during the year, at least 40 local actors experience on the professional stage. Many of these are perfect simply not up to scratch. On the other side, the imported stars filling the big roles push the core company into the middle range, where their great charms as performers and their familiarity have less chance to work to draw audiences in. In *Bedroom Farce*, at

least, there was a chance to see them all performing well. With Mylene Morgan, particularly, and Allan McFadden as Kate and Malcolm, you could feel the audience lift every time their name is up. Ian Lederman, as Sweeney, brought new life and energy into the old couple's room in her own telephone scene.

The Threepenny Opera is still a much more interesting production though. The programme quotes John Wilkes writing: "The Threepenny Opera presents a problem to earnest-minded interpreters, since it is hard to reconcile its flippancy with Brecht's status as a Communist playwright." The play is simply not very political, yet we expect it to be. There are striking Brechtianisms ("What's the difference between murdering a man and employing a man?") but they are not referred to what someone, like Gay's original, did a bit of a romp.

There are many elements in this production which at first seem to play down the romping. The music, though of a first class professional standard, is academic and hesitantly sincere but not theatrically energetic. The acting is pety and rather austere. By, rather heavily, emulating the pop culture of musicals which the original period seems to ignore (these days, the production makes blundering on the lack of toughness of thought in the script itself. On the opening night the first act was very slow).

And yet all comes good. The play is set in the '30s, at first sight another startling anachrony (it wasn't a very lively time) but justified in the end by what is said about bourgeois crime in "the age of despondency". The '30s were a great time for bourgeois and industrial crime, and the latitude of the age allowed nice flourish. Anne Norris has dragged *The Threepenny Opera* from the hands of period campy, and sentimental romantic nostalgia, and given it a fresh hard relevance which a "dare I say it?" completely Brechtian.

The professional performances are evenly good: clear, simple and devoid of histrionics, almost to a fault. Rob Brown and Beverly Blankenship look right as Macheath and Polly. Sue Crankshaw and Allan McFadden as the Frodochews were disappointingly bland, knowing what these actors are capable of, but like the other two they came alive in the songs. The singing is tame, of the most direct and engaging I have heard for some time — due credit to McFadden's vocal coaching. Frank Gardell is a quiet Tiger Brown, emphasising the pathetic side of Brown, rather than the corrupt. Best of all is David Wood's bemused, gravel-voiced Narrator — a part he obviously enjoys and aims to link the whole show together with great style.

Rewarding experiences

THE HOMECOMING COLD STORAGE

By Barry O'Connor

The Homecoming by Harold Pinter Q. Oscar.
Presented NCR, Opened August 19, 1980.

Director: Michael Brockle. Designer: Arthur Binks.
Stage manager: Caroline Weldon.
Cast: Mary, Brocklehead Simon, Mykelti Arkell Sam,
Ben Buckle, Joe, Alan, Ben, David, Don, Sam,
Simon, Ben, Simon Page.
(Hampstead)

Cold Storage by Harold Pinter in French, Photo.
Medium, French NCR, Opened August 7, 1981.
Director: Nigel Gordon. Designer: Laura Richmond.
Cast: Sheela Landay, Ben Jones, Mary, Mykelti
Arkell, Ben Buckle, Joseph P. Morgan, Ben Young.
(Hampstead)

Perhaps more than any other of Pinter's puzzling and perplexing plays *The Homecoming*, which is considered by some to be his best, invites the need to search for meanings, look for explanations and try to tie up loose ends. It does this because of its apparent and seemingly unattainable variety.

However you explain *The Homecoming*, you can fly off into the realms of the gothic, the surreal, the absurd, the nightmare in order to do so. It is a play unlike any other play perhaps, that exists in and through its very recovery. What a pace for action! The tension, the underlying time-bomb of the action, makes this a most powerful piece of literary and theatrical art. It is the nervous of the play. *The Homecoming* is not naturalism to be interpreted but usual to be felt, experienced and shared.

The play progresses through a series of power struggles. A very subtle and in that subtle Pinter style, battles are fought over glasses of water and cheese rolls. Victories are won or conceded and the wounded bleed internally. These wounds play the game, or won't, leave or erupt blaring out their black secrets on the peaks of collapse. The others warren, anxiously claiming their prize. The queen has it back in the hand and the other faces out their relationships to her majesty, crawling over her, stroking her, bowing for a kiss.

Louise Page's mother whose wife Ruth has all the stigma and false pose necessary to this pivotal role. She moves languidly with quiet but definite sexuality. Ruth is more than a match for Louisa's mother machinations, but Malcolm Roth is equal to the creature of villainy and remorse, cool in the face of violence and malicious in his self-appreciation as the tight manager of the



Ben Young and Len Korman in *Cold Storage*

proseptic document. Ben Gabriel's Mary, the curious mother Laher of the group, has some wonderful moments as he imposes his paternalism on everyone and battles personally with his brother, Ben Buckle's tortured Sam, perhaps the only normal one in the bunch. Alan Bell does very nicely as the blank horse Joe, in *don*. Don Mamounes as the blank academic Teddy.

This is another considerable offering from the successful Q-relationship of Arthur Binks, whose designs strike the right note of unexpressed common-place again, which the outrageous can be contrasted and Richard Brockle, whose recent *Measure for Measure* has already demonstrated that he is a director who likes to get inside a play and reach for its soul.

Like all the best comedies *Cold Storage* is a joyous celebration of life and living. That's the realisation the play reaches, but along the way some doubts and images creep about the play's intentions. Is this just another dark hospital drama, leaving the moments of wit and cynical wit? Male tenderness by sentimental making? No, this is neither. *Whose Life is it Anyway?* nor *The Servant of Two Masters*. *Cold Storage* is in fact a better play, a more human play than either of its antecedents. And this Ensemble production gives that humanity its just expression.

Two men meet on a hospital roof garden

in New York City. They might never normally meet in such intimate circumstances. They are both in the cancer ward. One is an art broker the other, who is older and more so, is a Greenwich Village teacher. The one has cancer and the other squirms deliciously under the threat of cancer. One is in a wheel chair because he has to be, the other because of hospital regulations. ("It's their way of getting you used to living a cripple"). One has spent his life in cold storage, the other is the very back of his neck. The one brings the other to acknowledge life and to start to exist.

The play is a rare study for the actors, especially for Ben Young who shows himself to be an actor's actor. The parts are well written and beautifully acted. Mr Young has all the best lines, but he does have the most demanding part. This is to say that Len Korman's is a lesser achievement in the very bottled-up role of Louisa. Both actors play death in cancer.

Len Korman's well a marvellous delicate affair, reminds us both of the roof top garden where the action is played, and at a more symbolic level of a hospital operating table. The stinging and warming contrasts beautifully with the warmth generated by Robinson's drama. Nigel Gordon's direction pays equal due to the play's parts and thrust nature, while at the same time underlining the human drama which makes *Cold Storage* such a rewarding experience.

THEATRE/QLD



STAFF REP
DICK BARTHELOME

Great force and coherence

MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA

by Veronica Kelly

Mourning Becomes Electra by Eugene O'Neill. Queensland Theatre Company. 9400 Theatre, Brisbane Qld. Opened August 6, 1988.

Designer: Robert Kennedy, Designer: Graham McArthur, Lighting: James Hanson, Stage Manager: Elaine Kennedy.

Cast: First Mamma: Norman Kaye, Christine: Margo Lee, Lorraine: Sally McKenzie, Orest: Andrew Jones, Agave: Rachel, Menelaus: Grant, Hecuba: Robert Turner, Pylas: Terry Brady, Orest's son: Douglas Biddle, Domestica: Helen Ward, Cook: Willem, Berry: Ross, Joe: Patrick, Lord O'Neill: (First named).

Two years ago I sat through a fine Canadian production of the full-text *Mourning Becomes Electra* an experience Wagnerian in its epic solemnity, sulphurous grandeur and more than occasional longeurs. One such viewing of the play is probably sufficient for a theatregoer to collect his fulsome, hence I approached the QTC's three-and-a-half hour version in the hope of getting the strengths of O'Neill's hazy monster of a script with the weaknesses lapses discreetly spiced away. The programme does not and since the identity of the benevolent in genius who has achieved his feat, but success is his, an understatement. Lorraine's direction *Electra* emerges as a triumph of considerable extent displayed in a production of great force and coherence.

With much of the moony repetitions of substantial "Friedrichian" boiled off, the play's substance is revealed as mostly still indeed, fine melodrama which imposes its authority by cumulative effect and emotional bravado. It is still easy to squint at the spelling-out in dialogue of obvious thematic links and the handling of inquisitorial scenes of exposition extending the relevant past, yet most of such awkward concerns are skillfully negotiated. *Electra* provides for audiences who usually must rely on Debra et al for such dare the full

theoretical rewards of melodrama, big moral themes, superhuman personalities in conflict, the psychic pandemonium of grief, love and revenge externalised fortissimo with unabashed rhetorical verbiage. It is no bad thing for a production such as this to remain in the range of theatre's big artillery.

Norman Kaye's Essie Mannon presents not at all such a repressive and villainous Persian as he's cracked up to be, which is dramatically appropriate as his reminiscences, though under frequent discussion by others, is not actually displayed in action. Thus Essie appears as a credible matriarch of his daughter's worship, and a woman no less than the rest of the family of his own fear of love and freedom. For his later age, the hunched Adam Brandt, Kaye reveals the picture revealing an attractive figure of the doomed promise of liberty doctored and always destroyed by the Mannons.

After the demise of these two the male bit is finely carried by Andrew Jones's Orest, who develops a sensitive progression from psychic youth to haunted age, the aspects of the role demanding Orestian possession are particularly good. *Electra* is rather like an Archetypal prototype in that it threatens to collapse into relative anti-drama because of the splendour of the first play, but no danger of that here.

It is in the female roles that the big rewards are to be found, and these are splendidly cast. Rachel Torrey achieves the feat of presenting a character who is truly good without being sappy, and with her brother (Terry Brady) provides the light background against which the mummy play out their sinister *Contra* celebrating Christine Mannon. O'Neill's rendering of the magnificent Clytemnestra, avenger of her daughter's murder, lacks the heroic courage and resolve of the Greek original, whom one can scarcely imagine fudging a murder or blabbing her plans to underlings etc. Margo Lee's Christine has both pathos and emotional narcissism, plus the sexual generosity and attraction which is so fatal to her screwed-up lun. A believable assumption of a character one wishes the playwright hadn't so summarily dispatched to the intervening Forces of guilt and despair.

Presumably he was saving the full tragic nature for the daughter, and Sally McKenzie's Lorraine is quite simply great. This is a female Hamlet-like with magnitude and depth beyond anything to be found in the nineteenth century melodrama tradition to which O'Neill so generously helped himself. Ever intelligent, always

strong, varying from tense hatred to nervous fluidity and warmth, she conquers the enormous demands of the role with style. Her final self-immolation as the family tomb is not given as a morose death-drive but as a full adult assumption of responsibility and guilt, powered with some awareness by a true tragic character. To have seen such a performance is to have really seen something.

The Chorus characters are colourful, varied and orchestrated with an eye to modulation of the overall effect. Douglas Biddle and Errol O'Neill contribute their comic talents as character actors particularly in the scene of hysterical farce which usefully punctuates the appearance of the haunted house aura.

Electra looks good, displays the Company working at top pitch as an ensemble, respects O'Neill's committed and passionate mission and goes far out for making its full potential. This is public subsidy well spent, judging by the enraptured reactions of audience members around me who seemed ready to take all that the playwright could dishout and come back for more. Tremble, television, you can't compete.

Controlled energy

TRAITORS

by Jeremy Ridgman

Produce by Douglas Biddle. La Boite Theatre, Brisbane Qld. Opened August 12, 1988. Director: Malcolm Blythack, Designer: Stephen Biddle, Lighting Designer: Stephen Biddle, Sound Designer: Les Johnsons, Stage Manager: Daria O'Hara. Cast: Anna: Jennifer Brown, Catherine: Margaret Evans, Victor: Johnnie McQuinn, Robert: Graham, John: Sharon Ellis, Ruth: Mary Hamilton, Laura: Heather McWilliam, Lorraine: Gregory Johnsons, David: Steve Pender, Michael: Michael Pender, Wayne: Ross, Orest: Patrick, Dr. Menn: Kevin Hanson, Peter: Vincent, post: Renato (Provisional).

Traitors which is surely up for the record of the most performed Australian play of the year and which again opens in London, finds itself on home territory at La Boite: past the A P G and Nimrod — far it was here that Sewell's first major play was premiered in 1978. It is a bold return, a mature, brave and forthright work purposefully selected for an all Australian season (prior to the Nimrod success) and handled with total commitment to the raw truth of its confrontations, polemics and unfolding passion.

The toughness and uncompromising

nature of Sewall's work (comes from more than mere depiction of human cruelty, it is a feature rather of his farcical wrestling with the truths of history, his absorption from unbridled joy and his tough analysis of human behaviour under the conflicting stresses of duty, love and self-preservation. Malcolm Haylock's production, stark and simple, matches this commitment, beginning with a bare arena, gazed down upon only by portraits of Stalin and Bukharin and others now shrouded and out of focus, he throws the emphasis continually on the human beings who make politics happen. The pace, atmosphere and purpose of every one of Sewall's tightly integrated scenes are established with unerring accuracy, from the brief (but) of activity to the extended, complex confrontation between the newly returned Kravus (opponent of the purges and changes made in his absence, and his recently promulgated law insures co-contradict in arms, Lebeshev.

In the absence of director, Stephen Bittet's simultaneously researched costumes look more than mere authenticity. They contribute in the most effective way possible to the delineation of the characters. Lebeshev's new uniform fits uncomfortably around the neck. Ekaterina, in her development from innocence to experience and resolve assumes the tougher, more somber appearance of her mentor, Anna. Out of the simplicity of Bayle's theatrical persona is born a fascinating and instructive richness.

If structure is a 'bare room' of Australian playwriting, then Sewall must be one of the exceptions that prove the rule. His sense of juxtaposition and rhythm is masterly, especially in the build from the torture of Ruben to the suicide of Kravus and the apparent dissolution of the epilogue which follows. How complex the reverberations of that epilogue are, how fruitful its dialogue of defeat and resolve and its culmination of the strongest, hopeful relationship between Anna and Ekaterina. And how well it is served here by the underplaying of the women's final cut to do battle with the Nazi enemy, no Soviet heroics here, just the business of getting on with the job of the revolution.

Sewall's characters are complex, ambiguous, never mere political stereotypes in remarkable achievement, given the matrix of historical, ideological and theoretical debate within which they exist and the quality of the performances is superb. Jennifer Flowers strikes a magical balance between the feminism and Trotskyist resolve of Anna on the one hand and her desire for Kravus and love, born of comradeship, for Ekaterina on the other. Michael McCulloch's Kravus moves from the quivering pole of the agent returning from an assignment in London through

dawning realisation of the horrific contradictions in his post-war situation, role to eventual suicidal despair and heroism of Ruben displays a remarkable mixture of motives, passions and frustrations.

Mac Hamblin's portrayal of Ruben exemplifies the sense of controlled energy that pervades the entire performance of the play. It is there in the first secret meeting with Anna in the art gallery, and in the denial of shame and betrayal that crowns his martyrdom. Just why twelve members of the first night audience felt constrained to walk out during the admittedly horrific torture scene (though far more horrific in what it told than in what it showed) one will never quite know, nor why one of them left a gob of phlegm on the stage for us to remember him by. However, the commitment of the production and of the actors could have been no more evident than in the dedication with which Hamblin momentarily turned by that stark demonstration with the insignia of a backstabber. Ruben, fought back with unswerving determination to give one of the most moving performances seen at La Boite for a long time.



Michael McCulloch and Jennifer Flowers in *The Department*.

Clean and wryly witty

THE DEPARTMENT

by Elizabeth Perkins

The Department by David Williamson (La Boite Theatre, August 16-21, 1990)
Director: Rod Winkler. Designer: Leahy Crafts. Lighting: David Winkler. Stage Manager: Bruce Newcombe.

Cast: Gordon: Peter Graham, Betty: Kate Wardle, Sue: Susan Mitchell, Clara: Cleo Reynolds, Robby: Paul Tucker, Peter: Ron Smith, John: Kevin Stacey, Al: Roger Thompson, Clara: John Peter, Myra: Lyn Magowan.
(Pro Arts)

Townsville Civic Theatre's Summerstock production of Williamson's *The Department* demonstrated again that a play designed for the stage offers most when

seen live on stage. Coming a few weeks after the ABC's Australian Theatre Festival television performance, this production found audiences of whom an unusually large per cent had a recent knowledge of the play, and succeeded in satisfying and delighting them. Television close-ups and centring on individual moments lost much of the real point of *The Department*, which is about group relationships in a confined setting, and Rod Winkler's direction made the most of stage arrangement, grouping and body language. As the well-designed programme notes reported, Williamson says "My plays are studies of the collusions — funny and macabre — caused by differences between individuals within a tight social context", and Townsville audiences, who live in a pretty tight social context themselves, appreciated the laser and warmth, as well as uncomfortable, points of the play.

The Department is closely written, its humour is subtle rather than broad, and the cast put it over with balance and timing. As in all Summerstock productions, the cast was largely amateur, with varying stage experience, but apart from an occasional inaudible line there was little uncertainty and no weak playing. Neil Tucker as Robby rose well to the second half, after some hesitancy in the beginning, and achieved that sense of low-key but complete control of his little empire that Williamson aims at.

The play was skilfully cast and the actors made the most of opportunities for establishing character and interaction. Peter Graham as Gordon, Roger Thompson as Al and Cleo Reynolds as Clara held audience first, but by the end of the evening there was a comfortable feeling that one had seen a really well-rounded production. Lyn Magowan made Myra a strong-minded woman in a world of subordinate men, and each of the subordinate men conveyed that mixture of intelligence and impracticality that is the myth (and sometimes the reality) of academia.

Williamson's plays, with their clear situations, defined characters, pointed hints, accessible playing and demand for body acting, are an ideal challenge for amateur actors. Expert, painstaking direction is needed, which Rod Winkler gave, and the effect was clean and wryly witty rather than heavy and sinister.

Leahy Crafts's design of rose wallcovering, newspaper paper and stencils helped quickly the threatening and claustrophobic elements of the play, and careful costuming and make-up helped to establish the unrecognisable individuality of the characters inhabiting this world. Overall, a most enjoyable and satisfying piece of theatre.

THEATRE/SA

Marvellously daring

THE MAN FROM MUKINUPIN

by Michael Morley/State Rep

By What From Melbourne, Dorothy Hewett's new theatre company at The Playhouse, Adelaide SA. Opened Aug. 15, 1982.

Director: Kevin Palmer. **Assistant Director and Character Actor:** Michael Palmer. **Music Director:** Jens Rindes. **Designer:** Ian Mackay. **Lighting Designer:** Nigel Leung. **Stage Manager:** Peter Kunkin.

Jack: Harry Tapp. **Wendee:** Polly. **Ed:** Deborah Little. **Clara:** The Waters. **Turkey:** Carmel McIlwain. **Lenny:** Mavis. **D'Arcy:** John. **Audience Lady:** John. **Ed's Father:** Madge. **Mavis's Mother:** Stephen. **Clara's Mum:** Helen. **Clara's Dad:** John. **Sounders:** (A group named).

Realising the common interest to Australian drama — though not to the criticism of all else — the new artistic team at the State Theatre began its new season with Dorothy Hewett's *The Man From Mukinupin*. And, of this "musical play" suffers an embarrassment with *On The Waterfront* in terms of both script and production it was nevertheless far from the complete disaster so the have taken it for.

Dorothy Hewett has never been a writer whose plays could be easily categorised. Most are simply unlikely to fit one moment into herself and the next struggling up to an embarrassingly emotional flight of poetry. But there are always compensations for such flaws: as also for the intense personal and fully clumsy dramaturgy. At her best there is a wonderful energy and urgency about her writing, a refusal to take the easy way out, a wish to tackle both issues and characters on the author's own terms. *Mukinupin* is probably her most (apparently) light-hearted piece, with its portrayal of small town life in the early years of the century. The characters could easily have stepped out of a cartoon strip: they are unambiguously two-dimensional, scrappy caricatures. But identifying the author and performer to present individual yet recognisable traits. This type of characterisation is appropriate to the use of conventions of melodrama and the music-hall in the writing itself.

And yet there are also references to the "higher" dramatic genres — the masque, the play-within-the-play — even Shakespearean comedy. The latter is clearly reflected in the play's choice of two worlds for presenting life in Mukinupin: the light side of town and

the dark side of town with characters who are twins for those from the higher regions. A trifle self-conscious? Perhaps. Likewise, one might object to the author over-emphasis on citing writers like Wilde, Dylan Thomas and even Faulkner. But given the choice of setting and form, such references are probably inevitable and the temptation to "imitate the author" is also



Ed (Her role as Ed) features in *The Man From Mukinupin*.

diverting. A more fundamental weakness, however, is the play's storyline. It's all very well to appropriate the melodrama's formulas for comedy and subtext but unless there is some sense of direction in the storyline, one's interest tends to flag. This was particularly the case in the second half where, after the early scenes, one sensed a bit too soon that all the loose ends would be promptly tied up or snipped off, and everybody would live happily ever after.

But balancing out the structural weaknesses were some well-observed and cleverly written characters, and a readiness to make use of a wide range of theatrical tricks. Moreover, the dialogue is, for the most part, sharper and lighter than in many of Mr Hewett's earlier plays. Tony Strachan's performance as the town brother Jack and Harry Tandy — the former a grocery clerk coping both the possibilities of a wider world as well as the confines of the cute Polly

Perkins, the latter a black sheep who ends up as a diva, a shrew, a shrewed warrior — was robust and engaging. However he seemed more comfortable as the simple, open Jack than as the disillusioned, cynical Harry — a point which calls for more savagery and bleakness. Robert Grubb as Carl, the travelling-salesman-with-hopes-for-Polly's-hand, was suitably sappy and lawning while maintaining his usual splendid line in representing pomposity. He also tackled the role of Miss Monmouth, the tropical impressionist connoisseur, so if he were the principal terror straight out of a bad minor Italian opera — in a dramatic, stupid and way over the top. Absolutely appropriate and hilariously funny, especially in the version of "The Stargazing of Desdemona" with Daphne Gray as a Desdemona who deserved not so much stamping as something to be proud of. Her role as Ed, for her wonderfully fast-paced reading of the role. Deborah Little's Polly Perkins was undeniably real and appealing — qualities most too easy to maintain without boring an audience. She also coped reasonably well with the role of Polly's half-sister, even if, though the part itself seems rather clumsy and contrived.

Once again, the company proved itself well capable of dealing with the demands of singing and acting roles. The work includes songs to music by Jim Carter which range from the lyrical to the comic. Undoubtedly the musical high point is the closing song, "Carousell", many of which are used as a resource itself through the production. Most of the other seemed apt without being especially memorable. The harmonic scenes, both simple and repetitive, the melody lines dramatic. More scenes could, perhaps, have been paid to the old Broadway staples of "spitting" songs in a show — that is, writing good and clever tunes for one or two carefully selected and placed numbers in each half. Kevin Palmer's direction caught the light, affirmative mood of the play well, but the darker sides went for less. However, his handling of the transition from straight scenes to musical numbers and back was effective and fluent. Sam Russell's designs cleverly combined the right small-town feel with clever perspectives of sandhills and items running back to an expanse of horizon.

Mukinupin is not an easy or accommodating piece. But it is full of adventures, wit, of moments of real poetry, of author's conviction, that the Australian temperance and landscape need not be caught by comfortable naturalism but by a postposition of style that transcends realism, poetry and the grotesque.

King Stag for grown-ups and Pinter's Middle Class Morality

PERICLES AND BETRAYAL

by Barry Pless

Pericles: Prince of Sicily by William Shakespeare. State Theatre Company at Theatre M, Opened August 9, 1980.

Directed and designed by commercial sign-writer, at among the artists, with Nick Knight, Nigel Lindsay and Richard Robinson. Stage Manager: Wayne Jeff. Production Stage Manager: Carolyn Johnson. On Hand: Philip Davis, Pinter, Wayne Jeff, Adam Robinson, Anthony Heald, Adam Davis, Robinson, Thomas Dorn, Bill John, Robinson.

Pericles: Tom Courtenay, Pedras: Jonathan James, Lysander: Simoned by Elizabeth Burt, Peter Robinson, Thomas Dorn, Simon Dorn, Elizabeth James, Thomas Dorn.

The State Theatre Company recently embarked upon a programme of productions outside their regular venue at the Playhouse. The first was a version of Shakespeare's *Pericles* with the younger members of the company working with director, Nick Knight.

Pericles, though apparently very popular in Shakespeare's own time, is now a very rarely performed play. It suffers for two related reasons. Firstly, for purely the early scenes are very suspect and are usually dispensed as the product of another hand: a far more inferior one to Shakespeare.

Secondly, the play with or without the suspect scenes is tedious and slight. It follows the wanderings and losses of Pericles as he travels the ancient world responding to shipwreck and misfortune. He marries only to lose his wife in childbirth. His wife's body is committed to burial at sea and his daughter is committed to the care of another. The plot thickens. His wife was not in fact dead when she was cast overboard and after being released from her watery tomb by fishermen commends herself to a solemn temple-bound life. The daughter when grown invokes the jealousy of her guardian who orders her despatched. The monster is banished and she is whisked away by pirates and sold to a brothel-keeper.

To cut a long story short *Pericles*, his wife, and his daughter live happily ever after.

The tale is one of chance and coincidence. Unfortunately life is not a matter of such chances and coincidences that our own intentions and actions are insignifi-

cant. But it is also a tale which unfolds merely at the level of appearances. *Pericles* is treated in a "common" manner because it appears to be a "mere" shipwrecked sailor, yet when it is revealed that he is in fact a royal prince all doors are opened to him. The same is true veraciously for his wife and daughter.

All relationships are based upon class and rank. About that Shakespeare is very perceptive even if the bases upon which they rest is obscured.

The STC's production is in many ways an unimaging one. Some of the performances were quite good while others just did not come together. The overall score was probably the best. The staging and scoring with audiences on both sides of the stage didn't help the performers. Two often it was a choice of which side to face for the scene.

The whole production appeared in many ways to be an experiment. Not only was it a different venue for the STC but the directing and acting seemed to be trying to arrive at a different relationship with each other. It might have worked but not with *Pericles*. Choosing a play for mostly formal reasons is fraught with dangers. If



Philip Davis (*Pericles*)

Pericles was about something more important one might have forgiven the experiment.

While the STC moved out to Theatre M for *Pericles* The Stage Company moved back into the city to the Balcony Theatre for *Betrayal*.

Pinter soon remarked during an interview that he was rather hostile towards audiences. Further, he said, it was a mistake to care too much about them for what was important to him was whether or not a particular performance of his work expressed what he set out to say. Given this view and the fact that later in the same interview he disclaimed any social function of any value in his work, it is difficult to

assess the *Betrayal*. It is not a particularly inspiring play. The dialogue is often stilted and cliché. Moreover it would be quite possible for the characters to exchange their dialogue with each other without seriously altering the meaning of the work.

The morality of the *Betrayal* is very much the morality of well-educated middle class people. It is a kind of morality which many of us find difficult to comprehend and some of us find incomprehensible. Pinter's play intensely concerns the relationships between the marriage of Emma (Diane Chamberlain) and Robert (Lee Taylor) and a long-term affair between Emma and Jerry (Wayne Bell) and the friendship between Robert and Jerry.

The play commences with a meeting between Emma and Jerry some two years after their affair has ended at which she tells him that she has just discovered that Robert has had many affairs during their marriage and that she and Robert are going to separate. The play then proceeds backwards in more ways than one. Each scene precedes the scene before it in time until we arrive at the fateful night of the party where Jerry propositions or proposes to Emma. They both arrive at the same thing: that they embark upon an affair.

The crux of the matter is that unbeknown to Jerry but known to Emma, Robert was aware of the affair between Emma and Jerry two years before it ended and said nothing to Jerry in all that time about it. Possibly this was because he was so engrossed in his own affairs or because his apparent friendship with Jerry was more important. The point is never made clear.

The problem with a moral tale is to choose a morality which is worth being moral about. There does not seem to be much point in following the meanderings of these interconnected relationships.

Despite the not inconsiderable limitations of Pinter's play and the inconsiderate superficiality of much of his dialogue, The Stage Company's recent production of the *Betrayal* was worth seeing for the very tight acting by the quartet and the harsh spartan direction by Leke Dayman. The Stage Company succeeds in parts where Pinter failed. Wayne Bell made Jerry believable. His scenes with Diane Chamberlain worked. Lee Taylor had the most difficult role of the squash player and all-round cardboard cut-out Robert. With Jerry, Emma worked but with Robert it was all up-hill. Alan Lovell's water turned on the brink of humor and service humanity with just a hint of that well known Spanish smile. It was a good production. It isn't a good play. The idiosyncratic meanderings of middle class morality are just not that interesting.

THEATRE/VIC



STAGE REP
JANE RIDGEWOOD
SPEAKS

Sprightly production

THE MATCHMAKER

by Colin Duckworth

Mr Matchmaker by Thornton Wilder. Melbourne Theatre Company. Melbourne Theatre. Melbourne. For Directed 19 August 1988

Director: James Calverley. Design: James Ridgewood. Set: Marlene Vandergelder. Costume Designer: Vivian Davis. Music: David Litch. Music by: David Litch. Robert Evans. Andrew Kilgus. Patrick Reed. Mrs Dolly: Lisa Hulse. Barbara. Vera Van Houten. Rosa: Margaret Long. Helen: Julia Hulse. Maria: Lisa. Helen Davis. Elvengood: Amanda Muggleton. Goldfish: Peter Gorman. August: Johnny Quinn. Calisto: John Burrows. Cook: Jacqueline Kellner. (Photo courtesy)

The barely repressed groan inspired by the request to go and sit through a play by

the creator of *Our Town* and *The Skin Of Our Teeth* was rapidly proved unjustified by Simon Calverley's sprightly production of this hybrid period piece. In borrowing the plot laid down by John Galsworthy's farce *A Boy With Spoons* (1935) and its Viennese version of Johann Nestroy (1842), Wilder had intended to write a parody and then "shake off the nonsense of the nineteenth-century staging" by making fun of it. Why he should have wanted to bother to do this as late as 1954 is puzzling. The point of the parody is lost on spectators who now are so far removed from its object.

What emerges now is a jolly good romp, some clashed social types very similar to those of *Alibi*'s *Chorus*, and the occasional marinating wit spiced to reassure us that the play is nothing so low as mere entertainment, but is "also an aspiration of the young... for a fuller, freer participation in life," as Wilder put it.

Wilder's main innovation was the creation of the prime mover of the intrigue Dolly Levi (Lisa Hulse). "Dash," we now have the scenario of the film of the musical of the second version of the first version of the adaptation of the translation of the original play, will the real author stand up, please?

The central problems of this well-made farce are slight enough and hardly sustain the weight of Wilder's rather pretentious

social message. Will rich merchant Horace Vandergelder be tricked (or persuaded) into marrying Dolly and into allowing his son, Elvengood, to marry her ardent lover, Augustus? As both the latter are pretty colourless characters and Horace changes his mind about them without reason in the final scene, the interest shifts to the lesser love triangle between Rosa and Cornelius.

Lively and engaging as Mrs (Elvengood) is in this part, it is just too freely written for her to make a worthy central character out of her. But from a different master, Julia Hulse measures up to her Irish wife with great aplomb and sense of touch enough to balance adequately the grand performance of Marlene Ridgewood as Dolly. "Boué, charming and ingenious" she may be, but her qualities of fantasy, warmth and tolerance are strangely brought out, culminating in her stoniest (for Wilder) final speech to the audience, informing us that money is like manure: it has to be spread around.

A good deal of the visual fun of this production emanates from David Litch's frantic attempts to cope with the ever-changing situations life presents. Rapidly with his gymnastic dynamism and controlled timing of movements are a constant source of comic delight.

As the traditional bow-wow-villain-comic-escape handed down to us from commedia dell'arte and beyond, Charles Tappin gave us a very passable rendering of WC Fields which fulfilled the demands of the role comaciously, brightly, uncompromising, mean and yet sufficiently likable to avoid becoming an object of contempt or hatred. One has the satisfaction of knowing he has met his match in Dolly.

Fiona Van Houten does not make her appearance until the last act but Rose Sturgeon quickly establishes her as a fully rounded and forcible lady standing no nonsense from Horace (linked with such formidable opposition as she, Dolly and being a man would fend the coming of Casanova and the strategic brilliance of Napoleon to wit).

The cameo parts were a bonus with a rare sense of character and liveliness without caricature. The barbers' shop quartet (Irene, Maria, Cornelius and Barbara) was useful and well-timed. James Ridgewood's design (at least that which will do for *Phaedra* *Artemis* when the MTC gets round to it) was pleasant and especially for the Act 2 shop scene - versatile and airy.

One may regret that the moral of the play is, as Barbara is made to put it, that every ideal is an adventure. But it is a good thought to go around with.



Parted from Calisto (Augustus) and Maria Ridgewood (Dolly Levi) in the MTC's *The Matchmaker*. Photo: David Parker

Saga and Sexuality

IN DUTY BOUND CLOUD NINE

by Cathy Peake

In Duty Bound by Ron Elsha, Russell Street Theatre, Melbourne. Now Opened 12 August 1993.
Director: Judith Alexander, Designer: Peter Corlett, Lighting: Marco Taylor.
Cast: Fiona: Sharon Edwards, Serenka: Ray Lawler, Jack: Tim Hughes, Clara: Kate McMillan, Marianne: David Rosenzweig, Lenny: Robert Rowell, Nery: Margaret Young, Hannah: Alie Longman, Character: Margaret Cameron.

Cloud Nine by Caryl Churchill. From Factory, Melbourne. Now Opened 20 August 1993.
Director: Peter King, Producers: John Tinkle, Designer: Curtis Weiss, Actor: Monique, Set Builder: Myron Blasing, Costumes: Jo White.
Cast: David Moore: Danny Nash, Mark: Christopher Wilson, O'Connell: Jo White, Val: Katherine, Richard: Holly, Lenny: Lisa.

In Duty Bound by Ron Elsha has reappeared at Russell Street after an initial airing at the Athenaeum (21 last year). There the play suffered from a confusion of styles and several awkward transitions — particularly that between Acts II and III. It was also rather schematic.

In Duty Bound is a Jewish family saga, centred around the stresses and conflicts generated by one Jack — who, quite early in the piece, announces his intention 'to marry out'.

A great deal of the play is given over to the warmth and the verve of Jewish life — as wit, its dietary customs and its history. And the frequently repeated stacks of chicken soup and gefilte fish prayers and religious ceremony all contribute to a busy and lively stage.

At Russell Street, some changes in the cast and some re-working of the script have worked to its advantage. Under Judith Alexander's direction, its pace appears to have been accelerated and the cast are both more at ease with its naturalism, and more prepared to explore the darker issues of the play.

For Elsha clearly sees the culture which Fiona and Serenka struggle to preserve within the anonymity of Melbourne in terms of a struggle that is at once resilient and defensive, and he makes much use of a family album to evoke the past they can neither bury nor forget.

In this highly emotional milieu, one Jack's declared decision to marry a gentile wife is tantamount to treachery. As played by Tim Hughes he is certainly a more various and interesting figure than he was at the Athenaeum, and the conflict he generates is more deeply nuanced within the characters themselves whose previously — it was more a conflict of types



The Prime Minister's Cloud Nine

But the playwright's tenderness towards caricature and melodrama are still evident in Fiona (Sharon Edwards), who reacts to her version of the quest by diving for manaplanum, and Mordechai (David Rosenzweig) — the vulnerable family friend whose appetite is matched only by his supreme indifference to the events around him.

By far the most powerful writing is to be found in the character of Serenka, who, while he never hesitates to use emotional blackmail to destroy the relationship, is also conceived as a figure of some stature and integrity. Once again, he finds a sympathetic and restrained portrayal at the hands of Ray Lawler.

In Duty Bound poses some interesting questions. All they still sometimes tend to be resolved, is a partly because the elements of farce are so completely integrated into the dramatic structure, and partly because Jack's final revelation in Act III is also next, and too much of a formal apology for naturalism.

Cloud Nine at the Prime Factory is a high spirited romp which attempts to discover the balance of power in the world of repressed and liberated sexuality.

Written by Caryl Churchill — whose *Lips: Shaving in Berlin* (London) was also produced there last year, it was originally set in Africa and England, but for the local production it has been transposed to New Guinea and the Robinson Gardens, Melbourne. Robinson Gardens, Melbourne. One would be told by the programme notes in fact designers Curtis Weiss and Arthur

Metelsky have given the play a naturalistic setting, using lots of their plastic, screens, yellow paint and a wonderful dangling wedding cake. Presumably their point was suggest the ultimate transparency of the barriers, the defences and the pseudo-rationalisations Churchill's characters use to solve their personal dilemmas with body and mind.

Churchill's play falls neatly into two halves. The first is certainly the more successful. There she explores the years and the rigid morality which go hand in hand with the Victorian double sexual standard.

The family she describes all have something on the side and for the most part, the sin of the piece is covered on their cover-ups, their fear and their predilection for punishment.

But while the writing here is crisp and moving, most of the performances have much to be desired. With the exception of David Moore's Clara, the rest have great trouble with the Empire — a world which sits awkwardly on the Prime Factory stage, and it is certainly to the credit of director Peter King that it works at all.

The second half which takes place many decades later, and finds its amusement in the hijacked and selfish sexual mores of the '70s is much more confused. Though, with one exception, it is played by actors of the correct sex (unlike the first) and in style it is more accessible to that of the Ensemble, it is less than coherent, currently dated and awkward looking. In spite of themselves the Ensemble seems to have more affinity with the mingy crap than with the free-for-all urges of this section of the play.

Shepherd of dark pastures

BURIED CHILD

by Suzanne Spunner

Buried Child is Sam Shepard's Playboys' third production. Melbourne, The Opéra House 14 (1991)
Director: Roger Pulvers, Designer: Peter Gaudin
Music Manager: Brian Holmes, Lighting Designer: Robert Gohert

Cast: Robin Hardy, David Dodge, Robin Curran
Linda Wilson, Michele Stridter, Geoffrey Chidson
Vince, John Arnold, Shelly, Michele Nguyen, Patrick
Doran, Noah Myers.
(Professional)

With this production of *Buried Child* Sam Shepard and the announcement of a production of David Mamet's *David Mamet* later this year, it would seem that The Playbox is developing an unofficial cultural exchange between Melbourne and Chicago: to distil it into only one way of exchange.

Both Shepard and Mamet are from Illinois and both set their plays in the Mid-West. Shepard in his gritty, raw, wasteland and Mamet in its urban capital. Both are Pulitzer Prize winners. Mamet most recently. Shepard has been around longer but this is the first professional production of any of his major works in Melbourne, I will be surprised if it is his last.

Buried Child is not only an extraordinarily good piece of American drama, but a play consummately of the American tradition. For its subject and sensibility link it to an almost unbroken line with O'Neill by way of Tennessee Williams and with the great works of Hawthorne and Steinbeck. Yet it is not in the tradition of American naturalistic drama and this may account for the relatively long time it has taken for Shepard's work to be appreciated in America, the fact that his rate of absorption in Australia has been similarly slow could equally be explained in terms of our own well-known proclivities for naturalism.

This problem is exacerbated in the case of *Buried Child* because a superficial or conservative reading of it allows and perhaps, for those so hell-bent, invites a naturalistic interpretation. For like O'Neill's *Desire Under The Elms*, it is about an intense, interred, guilt-ridden, farming family. Given our shared rural heritage at this it seems remarkable that Australia has not produced similar families in our dramatic language (by comparison *Buried Boy River* looks like *The Solers*, ie. George Harrison David and Nicky), while we may have been spared the Puritans and

fundamentalist religion generally we have paid a fee culturally.

As seen in this play, Shepard's way is more recent of Chekhov's — nothing really happens but people spend a lot of time talking and dreaming about the past and all the important emotional events are conveyed in everyday banalities, tragically clothed in wit and almost always non sequiturs. However Shepard allows his characters none of Chekhov's speaker privacy, as integral as they are to Chekhov, personal guilt and its redemptors is to Shepard.

Buried Child's director, Roger Pulvers is American born and possessed of a profound abhorrence for naturalism so in many ways he is an ideal choice to realise Shepard's intentions. Moreover there is an uneasy affinity between *Buried Child* and the theme of Pulver's own work, *Bones*. Here he has the key to the outstanding depth and richness of this production, while American audiences have been baffled by the narrative irregularities of the play when it has been forced into a naturalistic time logic structure, we were exposed to the play's full resonance and its poetic acceptability.

Peter Corrigan's design of gales and water splattered skin and plastic sheeting in muted grays and greys was similarly

suggestive of the season-boundness of Shepard's imagery and made even more striking the contrast with thermal groups, the golden banks of sweet corn in the first act, and the orange brilliance of the cornucopia in the second act.

Buried Child is a beautiful piece of writing and it was well served by the fine playing of what could now be described as The Playbox Pulvers Ensemble. For of the seven actors, three five have been in recent Playbox productions and three of them in Pulver's own plays. Not only do they work well together, they have also begun to evolve a particular style of work which is physically and vocally control and perceptibly antithetical to the hegemony.

In addition two newcomers to The Playbox, Michele Stridter and Geoffrey Chidson, blend their performances in so well that one hopes to see more of them. Among so many fine performances — Robin Curran as Dodge, the dying patriarch of this dying family, gave a sustained and subtly modulated performance that never tipped the scales toward or away from Naturalism.

With *Buried Child* The Playbox has confirmed the trend that its Upstairs theatre is becoming a reliable source of challenging experimental theatre in Melbourne, and more than repaid the media loss with Mamet.



Left: Theatre Australia in Playbox's *Buried Child*. Photo: Jeff Barker

THEATRE / WA

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Surface history

EMPRESS ELIZABETH

Key Related Links

Foggy or Foggy Not? — a dose of realism on the life of the first Emperor of the French by Joseph Joubert
Published First Edition on August 2nd 1980
Locations: Maritime Museum, through Stone
Island

Introduced by Glenn Hinkler, Improv. Improv.
played by Neil Patrick

With *Esperanza Rising* another work is added to the growing number of one-person plays character portraits presented by actors with what must be quite extraordinary stamina and powers of concentration.

Sara Fennell takes on the formidable task of playing the aged but extremely lively Empress Eugenie, widow of Napoleon III, Emperor of France, as the war commences about her long and eventful life.

The year is 1999, the old lady is 93 and she has decided to join a conducted tour through the Châteaux of Compiègne, which was once her home. When they reach the bedroom she opens out. Letting the others continue on their way, she insists on remaining behind and taking a last, despite the tourists, made's moment.

The steel-matrix, black-haired, ground-a-shield-like, chair and table of fading elegance. After the tongue-in-cheek introduction by actor Glenn Heyburn, of the empress and her seemingly endless string of names and titles, a flash march to "We Pannell to entertain for the rest of the evening."

She is far more alone than she was in that other famous performance. So on *After Sage Because* in the present work she is not given the opportunity to meet to-morrow's characters on the stage around her: she has to rely entirely on her own charm, and on the credited fascination

of the biological material

The low-key start suggests it is all going to be mildly farcicious gossip draped in a veil of nostalgia, the parties when visitors brought 20 trunks for a hotel stay; the racks of linen on embroidery; beads been used once the palace walls started for the evening the angels could serve for all anybody cared; the charities and finances in Sorens' case; an ornamental parson, the Princess Winifred's pale complexion and apoplexy winded to hide her lack of beauty. Some of the name dropping becomes tedious when the famous names are not supported with a suitable anecdote to bring them to life. Gradually a fast dramatic outline declares itself again and again the point of crisis is referred to — the burning of the Tashmoo; the Regent's split-second escape from the rioting Paris mob through the back door of the Louvre; it works a little like a musical theme — the notes are sounded early and set to a crescendo with a detailed and lively recreation of the actual scenes in the second half of the play.

The character of Eugene is understated—there is a delightful feeling for story in her loneliness for self construction, in her old age the better off others who, she says are never safe. She has dreams too "Never say never," she advises. She also feels that "superstitions are unhealthy" and points the Pope "fancy having to be infallible all the time . . . it would keep me awake." Yet, on the night of her last escape she can sleep "as if the confusion had just been inverted".

Some of the more amazing revelations are the fact that when the grown grapes were smuggled out of the palace it was in dirty fish-wrappings and on the sporadic old days the waste from the palace toilets was recycled by the local vegetable growers, their gardens probably assuming that they were enriched by the "liquid fertilizer" so to speak.

The palace also used 300,000 candles a month, and after the burning of the Tuideries the insurance paid was 600,000 francs, not passed on to the Tuons apparently had suggested. One can see why the Second Empire eventually gave way to the Third Republic, but it clearly was far more a failed

One cannot help wishing that Jason Lumley had been as good a playwright as he must be a recorder of the minutiae of history. One is given a wonderful introduction to the surface, but perceived very few looks into the depths of his character.

**O, they do it
beautifully!**

THE WOMAN OF THE CLARD

1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 2073, 2074, 2075, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2080, 2081, 2082, 2083, 2084, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2088, 2089, 2090, 2091, 2092, 2093, 2094, 2095, 2096, 2097, 2098, 2099, 2100, 2101, 2102, 2103, 2104, 2105, 2106, 2107, 2108, 2109, 2110, 2111, 2112, 2113, 2114, 2115, 2116, 2117, 2118, 2119, 2120, 2121, 2122, 2123, 2124, 2125, 2126, 2127, 2128, 2129, 2130, 2131, 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135, 2136, 2137, 2138, 2139, 2140, 2141, 2142, 2143, 2144, 2145, 2146, 2147, 2148, 2149, 2150, 2151, 2152, 2153, 2154, 2155, 2156, 2157, 2158, 2159, 2160, 2161, 2162, 2163, 2164, 2165, 2166, 2167, 2168, 2169, 2170, 2171, 2172, 2173, 2174, 2175, 2176, 2177, 2178, 2179, 2180, 2181, 2182, 2183, 2184, 2185, 2186, 2187, 2188, 2189, 2190, 2191, 2192, 2193, 2194, 2195, 2196, 2197, 2198, 2199, 2200, 2201, 2202, 2203, 2204, 2205, 2206, 2207, 2208, 2209, 2210, 2211, 2212, 2213, 2214, 2215, 2216, 2217, 2218, 2219, 2220, 2221, 2222, 2223, 2224, 2225, 2226, 2227, 2228, 2229, 2230, 2231, 2232, 2233, 2234, 2235, 2236, 2237, 2238, 2239, 2240, 2241, 2242, 2243, 2244, 2245, 2246, 2247, 2248, 2249, 2250, 2251, 2252, 2253, 2254, 2255, 2256, 2257, 2258, 2259, 2260, 2261, 2262, 2263, 2264, 2265, 2266, 2267, 2268, 2269, 2270, 2271, 2272, 2273, 2274, 2275, 2276, 2277, 2278, 2279, 2280, 2281, 2282, 2283, 2284, 2285, 2286, 2287, 2288, 2289, 2290, 2291, 2292, 2293, 2294, 2295, 2296, 2297, 2298, 2299, 2300, 2301, 2302, 2303, 2304, 2305, 2306, 2307, 2308, 2309, 2310, 2311, 2312, 2313, 2314, 2315, 2316, 2317, 2318, 2319, 2320, 2321, 2322, 2323, 2324, 2325, 2326, 2327, 2328, 2329, 2330, 2331, 2332, 2333, 2334, 2335, 2336, 2337, 2338, 2339, 2340, 2341, 2342, 2343, 2344, 2345, 2346, 2347, 2348, 2349, 2350, 2351, 2352, 2353, 2354, 2355, 2356, 2357, 2358, 2359, 2360, 2361, 2362, 2363, 2364, 2365, 2366, 2367, 2368, 2369, 2370, 2371, 2372, 2373, 2374, 2375, 2376, 2377, 2378, 2379, 2380, 2381, 2382, 2383, 2384, 2385, 2386, 2387, 2388, 2389, 2390, 2391, 2392, 2393, 2394, 2395, 2396, 2397, 2398, 2399, 2400, 2401, 2402, 2403, 2404, 2405, 2406, 2407, 2408, 2409, 2410, 2411, 2412, 2413, 2414, 2415, 2416, 2417, 2418, 2419, 2420, 2421, 2422, 2423, 2424, 2425, 2426, 2427, 2428, 2429, 2430, 2431, 2432, 2433, 2434, 2435, 2436, 2437, 2438, 2439, 2440, 2441, 2442, 2443, 2444, 2445, 2446, 2447, 2448, 2449, 2450, 2451, 2452, 2453, 2454, 2455, 2456, 2457, 2458, 2459, 2460, 2461, 2462, 2463, 2464, 2465, 2466, 2467, 2468, 2469, 2470, 2471, 2472, 2473, 2474, 2475, 2476, 2477, 2478, 2479, 2480, 2481, 2482, 2483, 2484, 2485, 2486, 2487, 2488, 2489, 2490, 2491, 2492, 2493, 2494, 2495, 2496, 2497, 2498, 2499, 2500, 2501, 2502, 2503, 2504, 2505, 2506, 2507, 2508, 2509, 2510, 2511, 2512, 2513, 2514, 2515, 2516, 2517, 2518, 2519, 2520, 2521, 2522, 2523, 2524, 2525, 2526, 2527, 2528, 2529, 2530, 2531, 2532, 2533, 2534, 2535, 2536, 2537, 2538, 2539, 2540, 2541, 2542, 2543, 2544, 2545, 2546, 2547, 2548, 2549, 2550, 2551, 2552, 2553, 2554, 2555, 2556, 2557, 2558, 2559, 2560, 2561, 2562, 2563, 2564, 2565, 2566, 2567, 2568, 2569, 2570, 2571, 2572, 2573, 2574, 2575, 2576, 2577, 2578, 2579, 2580, 2581, 2582, 2583, 2584, 2585, 2586, 2587, 2588, 2589, 2590, 2591, 2592, 2593, 2594, 2595, 2596, 2597, 2598, 2599, 2600, 2601, 2602, 2603, 2604, 2605, 2606, 2607, 2608, 2609, 2610, 2611, 2612, 2613, 2614, 2615, 2616, 2617, 2618, 2619, 2620, 2621, 2622, 2623, 2624, 2625, 2626, 2627, 2628, 2629, 2630, 2631, 2632, 2633, 2634, 2635, 2636, 2637, 2638, 2639, 2640, 2641, 2642, 2643, 2644, 2645, 2646, 2647, 2648, 2649, 2650, 2651, 2652, 2653, 2654, 2655, 2656, 2657, 2658, 2659, 2660, 2661, 2662, 2663, 2664, 2665, 2666, 2667, 2668, 2669, 2670, 2671, 2672, 2673, 2674, 2675, 2676, 2677, 2678, 2679, 2680, 26

[illegible]

This year's production by the Gilbert and Sullivan Society of W.A. has even more points in its favour than last year. The *Temperance* of the Gossards is the most beautiful of the Savoy operas, plays as the recently re-furbished His Majesty's Theatre, provides the right setting. The whole enterprise is surrounded by an aura of style, elegance and confidence.

As one has come to expect from a John Milius production, there is a finely judged balance of discipline and transmuting humor, which—particularly in the large crowd scenes, creates an uncluttered, yet lively, natural effect.

The singing of the periodically trained chorus is nothing short of admirable throughout—a constant pleasure to eye and ear. While the splendidly parbed *Illustrated* march about and form various groups, the colourful, wotterish opuscular caricatures chapter themselves on the steps and platforms of Graham Macdon's sturdy-looking Tower of London as their individualised characters never otherwise

The confessions of the girls defy rapid summaries, but the extremely positive depictions, confusions and pressures are in this opera taken as a whole most accurately with the eventual loss in the roundabout of love. Jack Frost the poster gives a song to Sing. C) developing into a genuinely tragic figure.

Both James Boon as Jack Frost and Christopher Waddell as Wilfred Shadbolt the Head Jailer and Assistant Turncocks.

distinguish their performances by a greater emphasis on characterisation than is usually found. Brian makes the stooping jester an elegant, rather sophisticated young man with graceful movements and an easy disdain for the disadvantages of his profession. It is a very appealing interpretation of a character who is often played more bitter and self-pitying.

Woodruff's Shadwell is joyously crude and utterly clearly convulsed and satirical. Each time he comes close to his beloved Phoebe she flinches immediately, though, of course, eventually the intricacies of the conspiracy bring her to tolerate his proximity and even pretend to like it.

The comic scenes are less frequent in this work, and therefore stand out the more for being so well handled. Notably the stealing of the jester's legs (Phoebe, Woodruff, Brock), the Cook and Bull duet (Jack Pons and Shadwell), the two "Bugs" move to "Afternoon" — Phoebe, Woodruff and Pauline, and the duet between the reluctant Sergeant Merry and the determined Diane Carruthers. "She 'Baptist, capture!', he 'Ghostly, ghostly!'"

The two leading ladies, both excellent, are well contrasted. Maggie Sutton, fair and what in those days was fairly described as "lovely", combines a nice looking for comedy with an unusually pleasing rich voice, whilst Terry Johnson, as always a

trifle exotic and vocacious, is perfectly cast as Elsie Maynard the stooping player who breaks poor Jack Pons's heart. She adds this part to her other Grand Successes and her voice becomes more powerful and flexible each time. Based here is great advantage in "This done, I am a brick".

James Malcolm sings the somewhat pale songs of the hero with style and beauty, and Desmond Luker, whose so often played heaves in previous productions is this time restrained and dignified as Sgt. Merry, who masterminds the escape of the hero.

Minor parts are equally well prepared: they all have a song to sing, and O, they do it beautifully!

RTC's Second Season

The Rivernia Trucking Company's Second Season is now well underway with a highly successful production of the rock musical, *Grease*, just completed and a new 'one-man' show based on the classic Australian novel *Such Is Life*, in rehearsal. George Walley's adaptation of *On Our Selection* is to be performed in late November completes the programme.

Artistic Director, Peter Barclay, says the season is designed to foster greater community participation. Two out of three shows are large cast and will involve many talented young performers from the region. Also it has been decided to perform in venues other than our own theatre. *Grease* was performed at Wagga Wagga Civic Theatre and *On Our Selection* is going into one of the local clubs as a Christmas show. Eventually, it's an experiment to capture a new audience.

He is particularly excited by *Such Is Life*, devised by Peter and Ken Moffat with Stuart McCrory as Tom Collins. RTC believe in a high level of Australian content and, in particular, developing shows with a local character identity. Purphy's grand satire of Rivernia Bullockies seems just the right fare!



Ken Moffat and Peter Barclay

BOOKS



BY ROGER HALL
McARTHUR M

From social comedy to the fantastic

Middle-Age Spread, by Roger Hall. Price: Milburn. Currency Press, r.p.p. \$3.75.
State of the Play, by Roger Hall. Price: Milburn. Currency Press, r.p.p. \$3.75.
Jack Hunter's Dream, by James K. Baxter. Price: Milburn. Currency Press, r.p.p. \$2.50.

Spotlights on Australian Drama Edited by Waverley Farbridge. Macmillan.
I Left A English Outback, by D. Gonsky. Pergamon Press.
Enter A Dragon — Stage Centre, by Carol Brothers. Hodder & Stoughton. r.p.p. \$17.95.

William Shakespeare's The Taming — A New Age Adaptation, by Michael Fleck. New Age Press.

It must be annoying to Roger Hall to be called "New Zealand's David Williamson" (as he was when he was first predicted here)

just as it was annoying to Williamson to be called, as he used to be, "Australia's Neil Simon". And yet the Foreword, by Ian A. Gordon, to Hall's *Middle Age Spread* is full of exactly the things people used to say about Williamson: the delighted recognition of the character by audiences, the marvellous skill of his stage-writing, the obvious understanding in the comedy, the sympathy for the characters, the wily affectionate comment on society and the eternally playable dialogue. Social comedy such as this succeeds on the strength of its being accurate and firmly grounded in the social sphere from which its audience springs, but like Williamson Hall is finding that it travels well to Australia and with *Middle Age Spread* to London.

Again like Williamson (surely) and like Ayckbourn, Hall is discovering the power of cross-cutting between different places or times. *Middle Age Spread* cuts between a suburban dinner party, at which the great



middle-class women, adults, is revealed, and earlier scenes which show the adults here developing. The lines are not quotable lines in the way Williamson's are but they are the sort that you laugh at uproariously in the theatre. The craftsmanship is effortless and assured.

Hall's *State of the Play* has (to continue those obvious comparisons) the sort of segments which people sometimes derogatively ascribe to Ayckbourn. It shows a playwright, along with a once successful writer teaching a group of people how to create fully-rounded stage characters. In a series of sketches of their class careers (about their defining their own characters are revealed, and in the end the writer himself is guided into an outburst about his father which reveals his character, and incidentally, his reasons for writing the exercise as the first play). The plays themselves, although, far from quasi-overcome any personal prejudice against plays about wrong plays.

Also from New Zealand is James K. Baxter's *Jack Hunter's Dream* which has a rare and to me very attractive feature — it has a lot of weather in it. It is a radio play and uses very effectively the format and style of a radio play. How to show an old doctor's last day in the ruins of a country pub. Snow and wind range around him as he dreams of the colourful old days of the pub — a Tale of Love and Murder. It is a very charming little poem.

I mentioned a few months ago the new responsibility which Australian plays are finding on our school syllabuses. It is reaching alarming proportions with two new books for senior students. *Spotlights on Australian Drama* is an anthology of brief scenes from plays with introductions and essay questions. The questions mostly ask students to write full life-histories for

the characters or make prophecies or stage suggestions. The book is littered with minor inaccuracies and with careless samplings-up of complex plays. It is hard to believe that students will really rush to read the originals, and without that it seems a pointless and even harmful exercise. A little learning is a dangerous thing.

Even worse is *I Left A English Outback*, which wouldn't be mentioned here except that it is so outrageous, condensing six plays-rights as well as to students) and plays wrong-headed that it is a danger to the life of theatre in this country. Maybe the students at whom this is directed never go to theatre, but this book certainly won't change that. It will confirm whatever prejudices they have. If you see this book, close your eyes.

It is a relief to turn to *Enter A Dragon*. *Enter A Dragon* is a new novel by Carol Brothers. (*Enter A Dragon*, *Two Red Foxes*, *A Butler in the Making*) It is a *Dragon*, witty, unembarrassed life of the great Mrs Sedgwick (née Rembrandt) written on the service of the Higher Truth which James Agate declined as not what happened but what should have happened. Readers familiar with Brother's earlier novels in collaboration with V.J. Simon will know what to expect. It is very jolly.

Finally there is Michael Fleck's long, smart, intense adaptation of *The Taming*. I'm afraid I cannot bring report to describe it.

THE PERFORMING ARTS BOOKSHOP
2nd Floor, Crystal Palace Arcade,
595-592 George Street,
Sydney
Telephone: 267 2267

ACT THEATRE

AND ARTS CENTRE (0494787)

Theatrum Classicum: *Caesar* by Plautus, director, Paul Moraghan. To Oct 1
AMU Review, director Paul Thum. Oct 18, 19, 21, 24

CANBERRA THEATRE (497600)

Pastor Jorge. Oct 17, 18

REID HOUSE THEATRE WORKSHOP (470788)

Women's Theatre Group: *Old Girls Move Out*, director, Camilla Madden. Oct 4, 5, 8, 10, 28 - Nov 2

Canberra Youth Theatre: *The Aching Gutter* by Eugene Ionesco, directors, Michael White and John Oakley, Oct 2-5, 8-11
The Ignorance Company. Mr Jack, You All and 780 000 at various locations
 THEATRE 3 (4674222)

Canberra Repertory Society: *Antony and Cleopatra* by George Bernard Shaw, director, Pamela Rosenberg. Oct 1-4, 8-11

DANCE

CANBERRA THEATRE (497600)

National Folk Dance Company of Australia Oct 2
Archery of China. Presented by Nanking Acrobatic Troupe. Oct 11-18

OPERA

CANBERRA THEATRE (497600)

Canberra Opera: *The Barber of Seville*. Oct 8, 10 and 11
 For reviews, contact Margaret Wells on 412 0577 (after 480 706 6)

NSW

THEATRE

ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH WALES (3376611)

School Tours: *The Badlanders*, Australian folklore for infants, primary and secondary, metropolitan area until October 20
The Shepherd, legends of Australia for infants and primary, metropolitan area Throughout October
Jon Corser classical guitar for primary and

secondary. Riverina until October 15
The Book Book, Theatre Company, drama for infants, primary and secondary. South Coast. Until October 15

Adult Tours: *Flower of Lavenham*, Western Districts, Riverina and South Coast. Until October 5

More Than A Sentimental Shave by John Gurnon, Gosford, North Coast and Central West. From October 12

ANIS THEATRE PRODUCTIONS (9698380)

Court House Hotel, Taylor Square
Just as the Down Stalk by Tony Harvey

Peter Meredith and Malcolm Franklin, directed by Malcolm Franklin, music by Gary Smith, with Tony Harvey. Throughout October

Panada Inn, Pacific Highway, Erina, New

South. *The Actor Actor Show* by Tony Harvey and Malcolm Franklin, directed by Peter Meredith, music by Gary Smith. Throughout October

BREAO AND CIRCUS COMMUNITY THEATRE (342 6199)

Wollagong, Wollagong Club Theatre. *Reckless*

The Downside, *Up and Up the Spout*. Shows written by the company, directed by Frank Barnes. Throughout October

BONDI PAVILION THEATRE (397211)

Shake Spoke by Noel Coward, directed by John Galle, with Valerie Newman, Treacy Lee, Edward Lansdowne, Hilary Bamberger, Marc Lloyd, John Wiggins, and Cheryl Norman. Commences October 2

ENSEMBLE THEATRE (9298870)

Cold Storage by Ronald Kisman, directed by Hayes Gordon, with Len Kavanagh, Brian Young and Renee Barber. To October 4

Golden Pavilion, *Thelma*, *Escape* by Rodney Milgoin, directed by Brian Young. Commences October

FRANK STRAIN'S BULL 'N' BUSH THEATRE RESTAURANT (337 4627)

Three Acts, director, George Carden, with Noel Brophy, Barbara Wyndon, Garth Heale, Neil Bryant and Helen Lorian. Throughout October

FIRST STAGE THEATRE COMPANY (82 1603)

The Winner of the Game in Dreams. Form by Gary Baxter, directed by Chris Lewis, with Angela Bennet, Graham Cameron and Gary Baxter. Touring to schools throughout October

GENESIAN THEATRE (33 3641)

Plagiarism by George Bernard Shaw, directed by Anthony Hayes, with Sarah Browman, Guyon Mitchell and Fred Cross. Throughout October

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (312 3411)

The First Lady, *Where House Is From* by Larry King and Peter Masseron, directed by Jerry Yoder, with Leonard Bayle, Alfred Sander and Mona Richardson.

Throughout October

HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY (267 3324)

Jeanylene, *Opera* by Nigel Brock, director, Anne Nelson, with Syd Crackbank, Beverly Blackship, Affie McFadden, Mylaine Morgan, Frank Garfield, David Wood, Car Lohmann. To October 4

THE KING O'MALLEY THEATRE COMPANY (822 6283)

The Sydney Theatre

Lord Flaubert's Great Big Adventure Book, *Book* by Rob George, directed by Les Mannos, with Mirreys Grails, Sean Scully, John Hanson, Robert Hughes, Rod Spens and Anne Crisp. Until October 5

The War Horse by John Dumas, directed by Susan Wallace. Commences October 8

KIRRIBILLI PUB THEATRE (72 1415)

Kirribilli Hotel, Milsons Point

The Robin Hood Show by Perry Quanton and Paul Chubb, directed by Perry Quanton, with Leslene Smith, Michael Ferguson and Ross Mahan. Throughout October

LES CURRIE PRESENTATIONS (38 5676)

Colours, devised and performed by Colin Douglas and Tony Sator for infants, primary and secondary, NSW country throughout October

Alexandre Morois, Spanish dance for infants and primary, North West Hunter and North Coast from October 6 to 24

White Rabbit, Brown, male instrumental for infants, primary and secondary, North Coast, Hunter and metropolitan areas from October 20

LIVING FLAME LUNCHEATIME THEATRE (357 1200)

AMP Theatre, Circular Quay

Steel Dore by Frank Marpa, directed by Michael Morton-Evans, with Felicity Gordon and Robert Davis. Until October 12

Morris by Patrick Macaulay, director, Michael Morton-Evans, with Felicity Gordon and Robert Davis. From October 12

MARIAN STREET THEATRE (486 3166)

Fanny, *Crises* by Wilkie Russell, directed by Alexander Duncan, with Tom Oliver, Elaine Mangin, Hilary Larkin, Jill Howard, Peter Snook and Terry Peck. Throughout October

MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (577 6585)

At the Loft with The Toppings family and Lorne Desmond. Throughout October

NEW THEATRE (519 3403)

Walter Asch by Bill Bryden, directed by Jon Williams, with Elysa Edwards, Christopher Howell, Peter Cowan, Jan Rutherford, Mark Wilkinson, Chris Reddick, Monna Walker and Michelle Fawcett. Throughout October

NIMROD THEATRE (669 5003)

Upstairs. *Polserne* by Ben Jonsson, directed by John Bell and Neil Armfield, with John Bell. From October 1
Downtown. *Sexual Perverts* in *Chicago* by David Mamet, directed by Ken Boucher. Until mid October

Late Night Show. *Faking in Love Again* devised and played by Jan Connell and Elizabeth Drake. Until October 23
NSW THEATRE OF THE DEAF (037 0200)

The "Shed" *Journeys* for primary schools and *The Unlucky World of Jasper Levis* for secondary schools both directed by Ian Watson, with Nola Colfax, David Lorde, Colin Allen, Bryan Jones and Rosemary Lunde. Metropolitan area throughout October

PARIS THEATRE (26 3253)

Sideshow. After by Robert Archer, directed by Rodney Fisher, with Nancy Hayes and Maggie Kirkpatrick. Commences October 6

Q THEATRE (0047) 26 3253

Happy End by Bertold Brecht and Kurt Weill. Commences October 17

REGENT THEATRE (61 6667)

Arabian of China until October 11

RIVERINA THEATRE COMPANY (0669) 25 3053

(Contact theatre for details)

SHOPFRONT THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (38 3446)

Free drama workshops on weekend. Shopfront Caravan touring city schools with *The Tapes* by William Shakespeare and *Children* and *The Tale Plot* devised by the cast and directed by Errol Gray. Youth Theatre Showcase. *Maybe You Should Have Thought Of That Before* by Paul Sanderson presented by Shopfront Youth Theatre. October 3, 4, 10, 11, 17 and 18
Here's Looking At You *Shenstone* by Ruth Dunsdale. October 24, 25 and 31
SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY (20 3888)

Drama Theatre. *SOH: The Merry Wives of Windsor* by William Shakespeare, directed by Mick Rodger, with Jennifer Clarr, Jason Finn, Max Phipps, Carol Baye and Robin Ramsey. Until October 22

SYDNEY UNIVERSITY DRAMATIC SOCIETY (6630555)

Downtown Seymour Centre. *The Cherry Orchard* by Anton Chekhov, directed by Lindsay Davies. Until October 4

THEATRE ROYAL (231 6810)

They're Playing Our Song by Neil Simon, directed by Phil Couck, with Japhie Weaver and John Waters. Throughout October

OPERA

THE AUSTRALIAN OPERA (20 568)

Pro Dantes by Ascher, conducted by

Richard Bontynge and David Krom, produced by John Copley. *The Barber of Seville* by Rossini, conducted by Peter Seymour, produced by John Cox. Ross Gaudman by Musorgsky, conducted by Elgar Howarth, produced by Elgar Howarth. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Benjamin Britten, conducted by William Rees, produced by Elgar Howarth. In repertoire until October 25

DANCE

THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET

Rogers Theatre. *Anna Karenina* choreographed by Andre Prokopenko, with Valentina Karlova. Commences October 27
For series contact Carole Long on 609 3048/337 4208

QLD THEATRE

ARTS THEATRE (36 2344)

Shock by Brian Clemens, director, Joseph Delehanty, designer. Bill Shawcross. Oct 9 - Nov 5

Little Black Sambo adapted and directed by Eugene Hickley

L.A. BOITE THEATRE (36 1622)

Legend Of King O'Malley director, Malcolm Haylock. To Oct 18
A Man Of The People by David Williamson, director, Jennifer Blackledge. Oct 24 - Nov 15

POPULAR THEATRE TROUPE

Ring 36 1745 for current programme
QUEENSLAND ARTS COUNCIL (221 2908)

On Tour Queensland Theatre Company's *Swadlow* by Les Lewis

QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY (221 5177)

SC10. *Concilio* by George Bernard Shaw, director, John Milson, designer, George Mackinnon, with Jerry McNair. Oct 17 - Nov 1

TOOWOOMBA ARTS THEATRE (361 306)

Swadlow. *Mr Shaw* by Joe Orton, director, Gung Nunn, designer, Charlie Boyle. Oct 13-18

TOWNSVILLE CIVIC THEATRE (72 3677)

The Mackay Musical Comedy Players present *Gips* Oct 25

How Could You Believe Me When I Said I'd Be Your Folks When You Know I've Been A Liar All My Life adapted from Goldoni, director Rod Winder. Oct 21-29

OPERA

QUEENSLAND OPERA COMPANY (221 2777)

Her Majesty's Theatre. *Don Pasquale* by Donizetti, producer, John Milson, designer, Tom Lingwood, orchestra. Queensland Theatre Orchestra conductor, Georg Tiner. Oct 1, 3
Marika by Friedrich Von Flotow, producer John Thompson, orchestra Queensland Theatre Orchestra conductor, George Young. Oct 2, 4

For series contact Don Bontynge on 336 9111

SA THEATRE

GROUP THEATRE COMPANY

AMP Theatre. *Man Overboard* by Frederick Knott, director Michael Dicker. Oct 15-25

Q THEATRE (222 3451) 89 Halifax St
The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams, director, Peter Goss. Oct 8-18

SPACE THEATRE (51 0021)

Adelaide Festival Centre. *The Last Of Mrs. Cheever*. *Farinella*. *Longshore*. Oct 25-Nov 1

STAGE COMPANY

Theatre 62, 145 Barbicade Road, Hilton. *Shock* by Anthony Schaffer, director, Brian Dehman. Oct 25-Nov 15

STATE THEATRE COMPANY (31351)

Theatre 62. *Twelve* by Stephen Sewell, director, Nick Enright, designer, Richard Roberts. To Oct 4

Swadlow by Bruce Oakley, with Max Gillett

Swadlow. *I And For You* by Anton Chekhov, director, Neil Armfield. Oct 7-11

The Playhouse. *What The Butler Saw* by Joe Orton, director, Kevin Palmer, designer, Vicki Semelher. To Oct 4

Swi by Martin Sherman, director, John Parker, designer, Richard Roberts. Oct 10-25

THEATRE GUILD (22 3433)

The Acting Company. Country Tour of State High Schools. *Swi*, *Swi*, *Swi*. Theatre Workshop. *Swi*, director, Sue Roder

Ensemble, the Little Theatre. *Um* of Adelaide. *Swi*, *Swi*, *Swi*. *Swi*, director, Neil Parker. Oct. 1-18

For series contact Film Ref on 221 8616

TAS

THEATRE

POLYGON THEATRE COMPANY

(34 8088)

Sole As Sole As Southern, director, Don Gay, with Warren Le Motec, Patricia Ashcroft, John Phelps and Don Gay

SALAMANCA THEATRE COMPANY

(23 5290)

In rehearsal with a lower Primary School show, with Peter Townsend Oct 1 - 14

Performances: *Refugee: The Girl At Home* Oct 15 - 31

THEATRE ROYAL (34 8266)

Royal Hobart Hospital Review Oct 1-4

For entries contact Anne Campbell on

(049)47 4470

VIC

THEATRE

ALEXANDER THEATRE (345 2828)

Afternoon performances of *The Magic Pudding* by Marconato Theatre of Australia Oct 16-24

AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING

GROUP (347 7133)

Front Theatre: *New Ensemble Show*

ARENA THEATRE (24 9667)

Chapel Perilous by Dorothy Hewitt, with the Victorian Independent Theatre Oct 3-18

Touring Schools: *The Whale, The Sugar Tree, The Ever Dead* by Ron Kellie For Upper Primary and Lower Secondary

Where's Paddy? by Henry Segerson For Lower Primary

ARTS COUNCIL OF VICTORIA

(329 4335)

Touring: *Agg, Dance And Singalong* with Michelle and Mike Jackson

The Magic Pudding from the original story by Norman Lindsay, with the Marconato Theatre Oct 16-21

COMEDY CASE

Brunswick Street, Footscray. Original Comedy entertainment starring Rod Quastick

COMEDY THEATRE (662 3233)

Edith Piaf presented by Playbox Theatre Company, director, Murray Cooper, with Jeanne Lewis Throughout Oct

FLYING TRAPEZE CASE (41 3737)

Missing Persons present *Faust* To Oct 15

Los Troncos Bay Barkin Oct - Dec

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (662 3211)

Envo, director, Harold Prince, musical director, Peter Casey, composer, Andrew Lloyd Webber, photographer, Larry Feller, lyrics by Tim Rice Throughout Oct

LAST LAUGH THEATRE RESTAURANT (418 6225)

Downstairs: *The Alley Sign Whizzer* Oct-Dec

Upstairs: Shows changing weekly

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY

(554 4000)

Athenaeum: *Private On Parade* by Peter Nichols, director Bruce Myke, art director, Paul Kasher, with Simon Chivers Oct-Nov

Russell Street Theatre: *The Elephant Man* by Bernard Pomeroy, director, Ted Craig, designer, James Redwood Oct 8 - Dec 6

Athenaeum 2: *The Mask* by Jean Genet, director, Judith Alexander, designer, Christopher Smith, with Ann Fordicity, Linden Wilkerson and Ann Charlson Throughout Oct

MURRAY RIVER PERFORMING GROUP (21 7613)

Albany: *Don't You Tell Me* with Robert Porter Throughout Oct

OPEN STAGE (347 7585)

The Italian Arts Festival present *Five Characters In Search Of An Author* by Luigi Pirandello

PLAYBOX THEATRE COMPANY

(63 4688)

Uppertown: *Dual*, *Paranoids* by David Margel, director, William Glahn, with Malcolm Robertson and Nick Holland

Ball Room by David Edgar, director, William Glahn, set designer, Sandy Matlack and William Glahn, with Malcolm Robertson, Nick Holland and Cliff Ellen Throughout Oct

UNIVERSAL THEATRE (419 3777)

21 Questions by Hans Werner Henze, with Linden Tennant Presented by The Victorian State Opera, conducted by Richard Davall Oct 16-18

The Italian Arts Festival presents *Il Pazzo & Rose* by Nino Rautava Oct 23-25

A Man Of Many Parts by Jack Hibbard, with Ered Parlow Oct 27-Nov

WEST COMMUNITY THEATRE

(370 3634)

Apples And All That now *A children's clown show* with John Thompson, Ian Mottram and Berni Connolly

Gals with Linda Waters Throughout Oct

MAJOR AMATEUR THEATRES

Bass Theatre Group (362 1682)

Clayton Theatre Group (878 1702)

Heidelberg Rep (49 2362)

Melburn Theatre Co (211 8630)

Pumpkin Theatre (42 8257)

DANCE

ARTS COUNCIL OF VICTORIA

(329 4335)

Touring: *The Wanderer East* with the Queensland Ballet Co.

NATIONAL THEATRE (334 0237)

Australian Opera Theatre Oct 9-18

Coppelia with the National Theatre Ballet School Oct 24-25

Vietnam College of The Arts School Of Dance performs works choreographed by Jonathan Taylor, Jan Struping and Ann Woolams Oct 18-20 and Nov 1

PALACE THEATRE (346 6651)

Swan Lake by The Australian Ballet Company with guest artist, Alexander Jordanov Oct 9-15

Cinderella by The Australian Ballet Company Oct 15-25

ALEXANDER THEATRE (343 2828)

Le Belle Helene by Jacques Offenbach performed by the Cheltenham Light Opera Company Oct 10-25

For current listings contact Kinross on

(07) 5918

WA

THEATRE

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE

(3216388)

Brand 4 Joke by Derek Benfield Director, Vivian Hall with Arthur Lane, Margaret Ford, James Beattie From October 26

THE HOLE IN THE WALL

(381 3483)

No End by Jean-Paul Sartre Director, Edgar Metcalfe Ends October 11

Deadly by Martin Shanahan Director, Edgar Metcalfe From October 15

THE MAJIC MIRROR THEATRE COMPANY

The Daughters Of The Sabbath (Dish Show) — appearance six or eight clubs around Perth throughout the month

THE NATIONAL THEATRE (325 3568)

Reverend by Harold Pinter Director, Stephen Barry with Alan Cassel, Leah Taylor, Maureen Ogden Ends October 11

The Secret Space of Dead by Mary Gage Early life of Charles Kingsford Smith Director, Stephen Barry, with Paul Mason, Alan Cassel From October 17

REGAL THEATRE (381 1557)

Foot Footers, a musical based on life and works of Tam Liner Director, Gillian Lynn From October 20th

WA ARTS COUNCIL TOURING PROGRAMME

THEATRE-IN-EDUCATION TEAM

Tour of Eastern Goldfields' Primary Schools with *Pin Pies*, *St George And The Kangeroo* and *Van Logger* From October 17 then another two weeks in November

PHOTOGRAPHIC TOUR

Bothwell's National Photographers Press Awards — tour of North West of Western Australia

(Continued over page)

MUSIC

CONCERT HALL
ABC FAMILY CONCERT — October 18
VICTOR BORGE October 13 and 14.
EIGHTH AND FINAL ABC SUBSCRIPTION CONCERT October 24 and 25
OCTAGON THEATRE
MUSICIAN IN RESIDENCE
STEPHEN SAVAGE October 6, 13 and 20

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THESPIAN'S PRIZE CROSSWORD
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Notes

1. Chap who involves the actor and me in a top-off (3)
2. Loyal Irishman leads rebellion with

- one hundred (9)
9. New necklace consists of decorative (10)
10. Shortly to turn as a promisee (10)
11. Tagless sweater related with a fever (5)
12. Rise above various characters in Jackson (4)
13. ... has arrived with difficulty to the heights around the author and the lung (7)
15. End of end of a length to provide weapons (7)
16. Floor Beltrami? (7)
20. Unmanufactured prima among the Indians, we hear (7)
21. Only one of Oakley's numerals? (9)
22. Best, instantly, attract, amuse the whole island (3)
26. When the epitaphs leave home they become visible (8)
27. Poor time has it's the ray of radiation that does it (3 4)
28. Points to the journalist's requirements (5)

Down

1. Diagram with stages based around the French language Institute (Capital Territory) initially (9)
2. Liked ducks? (3)
3. Plain classical version of delinquency (9)
4. Impresses athletes who kiss his head (7)
5. You French examine the question in Italy (7)
6. Old men might wear in it (3)
7. "You are more lovely, and more" (Shakespeare) (9)
8. In apter, it reads "Fish to Edward" (5)
14. Divisions could result in same name (8)
16. Copied again by this Wren (8)
17. Scum dealt crookedly in front (9)
19. Use wire in order to give out again (7)
20. Sounds as if the (Latin) have a fabric made? (7)
21. Upright comedian right with the small man (5)
22. Subject to international communique coming back (3)
24. Colour odd position in that is (3)

The master of last month's crossword was Mr Hugh Reed of Lakeland, NSW. The first correct entry drawn on Dec 25 will receive one year's free subscription to *Theatre Australia*.



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